

bugles
blow
no
more

CLIFFORD DOWDEY

Richmond, 1861-1865: A city under siege brilliantly brought to life in a great novel long recognized as a Civil War classic.

To each age belongs its own book and to Richmond, the South and the Nation, belongs BUGLES BLOW NO MORE. It cannot die, no more than our history can be washed away or vanish with the "bomb."

BUGLES BLOW NO MORE, starts with Secession Night, 1861, and ends with Appomattox. It is a story of Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, a goal of the Union Armies, storm centre of the war, ninety miles south of Bull Run, twenty-five miles north of Petersburg. The battles of the Seven Days were fought within two hours' brisk walk of the city. For four years the waves of war lapped the doorsteps of the people of Richmond.

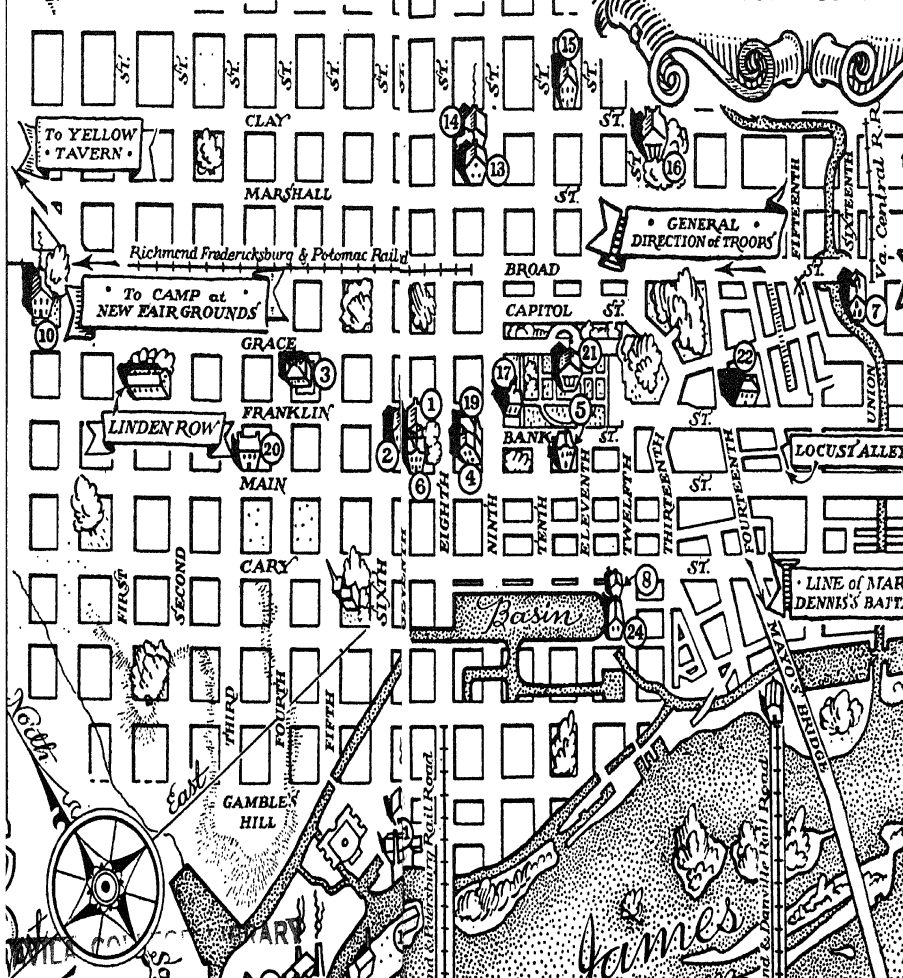
Mr. Dowdey is a realist. His emphasis is on the war, the fighting and the waiting—the waiting people so near the front that the sounds of battle were still in their ears when the first casualty lists were posted.



House
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 (Virginius Kirby's
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BUGLES BLOW NO MORE.

DOWDEY, CLIFFORD

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BUGLES BLOW NO MORE

By

Clifford Dowdey

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 57-5175

First Edition Published May 1937
Reissued February 1957
Reissued 1967

To
STUART ROSE

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April 1861

CHAPTER I

"A combination too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of traditional proceedings. . . ."—*President Lincoln's reference to the seceding states, in his call for volunteers to subdue them*

In the oldest part of the city, where Venable Street skirts one of the seven hills, Joe Fitchett stood on his front porch and watched his mother through the window. She was bent over a spray of blue silk, her needle a bright sliver in the glow of the low-burning candle. It was late dusk and Joe knew she was waiting for his return before lighting the lamp. The single-candle light was bad for her eyes and he should go in so she could stop her sewing.

He hated to. He had been standing there fifteen minutes, watching the April dusk deepen over the fields on Mechanicsville Pike. A farmer's wagon moved slowly over the hill of the road. Joe wondered if the farmer knew. He wondered if the people on Venable Street knew. Lights glowed through the windows and the houses were quiet. The light wavered inside and he looked in quickly. The candle was guttering. His mother bent more closely, her eyes squinted over the needle.

Joe had never noticed before how tired she looked. For the first time he saw the years of her living on her face. He knew he had done nothing to make those years easier. He had wanted to; he had promised her. Each time something would happen and his money would be gone. When she found out she would grow very still. Her mouth would draw in and the lines would cut like gullies in her face. Then she would say: "I know you mean right, Joey. You just need time to grow up. You ain't no different from

other men, I reckon." The last time, he had come home very sick from Jamaica rum. She had held his head on her thin knees and sung to him as she had when he was a child. *Go to sleep, my little pickaninny, Brother Fox will get you if you don't . . . Hush-a-bye and don't you cry, Mammy's little Alabama coon. . . .* After that he promised her he would never get drunk any more, and he would bring her some of his money so she would n't have to work so hard.

And now he had to tell her. The light wavered again. She looked up. Her face was still drawn in her intentness, but her eyes were wide and full of worry. The awareness of all the times he had put that fear in her eyes hurt him. But he had to tell her now.

He tiptoed to the edge of the porch and then stepped down loudly so she would think he was just getting there. He opened the front door into the cool darkness of the narrow hall. He smelled the damp plaster where the last rain had leaked through. Then he opened the door into the front room.

She had started up and her face was bright with the smile she always had for him. All at once she stopped and the smile faltered.

"What's the matter, Joe? You sick?"

He shook his head. He felt sick enough from the look of her.

"No'm. I got some news for you, Momma. Vuhginia's done seceded."

She stood there, bent forward, peering at him.

"What you mean — like the Southern states goin' agin the United States?"

"Yes'm." He shook his head slowly. "We'll be fittin' the Yankees."

"Fittin'? Like that Fo't Sumter battle? You mean Vuhginia's goin' to be in a battle like that?"

"I reckon so, Momma. I was talkin' to Brose Kirby and he's goin' to join the Old Dominion Guard and I asked him could I join with him."

She stood rigid, staring at him. Then all the strength seemed

to leave her body and she fell back in the chair. The silk splashed out on the floor around her feet.

"Now," she moaned, "now, just when you 're startin' to act right, you go and get mixed up with a wild one like Brose Kirby. That fellow 'll git you killed, that 's what. 'N' you 'll be off somewhere and Mr. Wade 'll think you 're crazy sho 'nough and you 'll never get another job."

"Aw, Momma, you don't understand," Joe said. He felt a little easier now. "Mr. Wade's the one who told us. He said we can all have our jobs back. Soon 's the Yankees see we mean business, he said, they 'll let us alone and we 'll all be better off."

"Let us alone? What 've they ever done to us now?"

"Aw, Momma, they 're always tryin' to get us to knuckle under to them. Mr. Wade said so. This way we 'll be shet of them and have our own country."

Mrs. Fitchett gave him a sharp, suspicious look. "What you talkin' about, Joe—have our own country?"

"That 's what this secedin' is," Joe said with authority. "We ain't goin' to be in the same country with the Yankees no moh. We 're goin' in the country with the other Southern states. Don't you know about the Confederacy? They got their own president and —"

"Joe, that 's the biggest piece of foolishness I ever heard tell of. Now you listen to me. I'm older 'n you and I learned to keep in my place. You leave all that to the rich people like Mr. Wade and to crazy ones like Brose Kirby. You ain't got no call to go mixin' up with what people like that do."

Joe shifted uncomfortably from one big foot to the other.

"Momma. Everybody's goin' to fight agin the Yankees. I'm lucky to go along with Brose. Most likely he 'll get to be a officer. And look, Momma, I reckon this 'll make a man out'n me. This is what 'll make me grow up, like you said."

His mother did n't answer. The candle was so low he could n't see her face. He did n't know what to say. In the silence, he heard the muffled thunder of a galloping horse and then a shout. There

was a red flare in the street, growing brighter. The flare of a pine torch lit the room for one moment as a horseman pounded past. In the brief light Joe saw that his mother was crying. Tears were falling on the silk of somebody's dress. The galloping hoofs dimmed and in the distance he heard a bugle blare. He shivered.

"Your object is to subjugate the Southern States and a requisition is made upon us for such an object . . . an object, in my judgment, not within the purview of the Constitution and will not be complied with. You have chosen to inaugurate Civil War. . . ." — *Governor Letcher's reply to President Lincoln's call on Virginia for troops*

The wind blew warm from the river, up over Captain John Smith's rock pile on Gamble's Hill, up along wide Third Street and through the trees shadowing the homes, and through the open doorway of "Charles Kirby, Druggist and Apothecary," at Main Street. But the wind blew cold on Philip Parramore, who was standing inside the door, for the drug clerk was sweating.

What company will you be joining, Mr. Parramore? . . . All afternoon the words of customers had hammered at his brain and now all the words and all the questions were pounding inside him, confused and terrifying. *It means fight, all right. . . . I wish I were a young man like you, Mr. Parramore. . . . Cavalry is more your style, I reckon. . . .* Yes, that was what they would all expect of him. That was the pose he had lived. He tried to picture himself in light gray broadcloth, with buff collar and gleaming buttons, his lean legs in shining boots against the flanks of a prancing horse. There would be girls cheering and he would lift his sabre in salute. But there would be rolling fields and other men on horses, hard, sure men with sabres lifted, but not in salute. For one vivid moment he envisioned himself swept forward on a run-

ning horse, swept toward the shock of men thundering at him, and a dark face like Mr. Kirby's son Brose looming over him with murder in hot eyes.

Philip closed the vision of his mind against it. To face that reality was like trying to face the reality of death.

"Philip!" Mr. Kirby's voice called from the rear room. "Are you listening to me?"

"What 'd you say, sir?"

Mr. Kirby's face peered around the partition. Philip saw the edge of a flapping towel on which his employer was drying his hands.

"I said will you examine those labels that came to-day from the printer? I want you to paste them on the new batch of spring water bottles if they're satisfactory. Haven't had time to do a thing to-day, the way people've been crowding in here. You'd think this was the Popular Convention hall. . . ." His head disappeared.

Philip moved slowly behind the counter. His legs were weak. He opened the box and glanced at the top label. The words made no impression.

"OAK ORCHARD ACID SPRING WATER: For Dropsy, Scrofula, Bleeding Piles, Dyspepsia, Chronic Dysentery, Erysipelas, Sore Throat, Thrush, Cutaneous Eruptions, Et cetera."

"Are they satisfactory?" Charles Kirby came through the rear door, putting on his gray beaver.

"Oh yes, sir; yes, sir. They seem all right." Philip moved around the counter and stood in front of his employer.

"And if you have time will you try to make some sort of window display? Take out the Jamaica ginger. I don't think I'll run the newspaper advertisement on the water, after all. I reckon people won't want to be bothered now with giving endorsements."

"No, sir. Mr. Kirby —"

"I don't hold much with that scheme anyway. It might be all right for Dr. Schlosser's bunion cure, to have endorsements from people in Philadelphia and Washington and Petersburg. He's at the Spotswood and a stranger and he probably needs some such

fanfare. But I doubt if Richmond people will care one way or the other who says they've been benefited by the water, do you?"

"No, sir. Mr. Kirby, there's something I'd like to ask you."

"What is it, Philip?" The voice was sharpened, but Philip knew it was from fatigue. In two years of clerking in the store, he had learned that Charles Kirby was a kind man.

"This secession — does it mean that men like me will have to fight?"

"How can I answer that? I suppose most men of your age will fight."

Philip drew himself erect, stood in his pose of the former young diplomat whose career had been mysteriously wrecked.

"You see, sir," — his voice achieved a judicial calm, — "I don't believe in this war — if that's what is meant by this secession ordinance they passed to-day."

"Oh, have n't you had enough for one day of what people believe?" Charles Kirby's tone was sharper than Philip had ever heard it, and his face was losing that composure Philip had always associated with him. "I don't believe in it either. But when Lincoln calls for troops from Virginia, we must either give them to him or fight against him. There's nothing you or I or people like us can do about it."

"That's the way everybody talks, Mr. Kirby — as though it's just a theory. Nobody seems to understand that it means individuals, like me, fighting to kill other people."

"I understand it well enough! I've got two sons, and a boy like Brose will certainly go the first thing."

"But what for? We don't own any slaves. This whole fight does n't mean anything to people like us."

"Great God, man, it means we've got to defend our state." For the first time since Philip had known him, his employer was out of control of himself. "We've got homes and families, have n't we? I've got this drugstore I've spent my life in. We can't just do nothing and be invaded as one of the Southern states. I did n't want secession. Nobody in my family did. But, by the Almighty

God, I'd rather join the Southern states against an invasion than send my son to invade them. And that's all there is to it. If you don't believe in fighting to defend your state, then don't fight. And now — good night."

For a moment Philip stood in sick surprise. From Charles Kirby, of all people, he had expected sympathy. He could n't have it end like this, with Mr. Kirby disgusted and himself humiliated.

"But Mr. Kirby!" He tried desperately to hold his suave pose. "You don't see that it is n't fighting or not, with me. Even if I did believe in the war my background would be against my being a soldier. As you know, I was trained for the diplomatic service —"

"As you've said," Charles Kirby interrupted. "I don't know anything about you except that you've been a good clerk."

"But —" Philip stared at the harsh disbelief in his employer's eyes and he could n't go on. He had never doubted that his pose was accepted. It was all that stood between himself and reality.

"I'm sorry, Philip." The voice was gentler. "I'll have to go."

"Mr. Kirby. Do — do you think the customers will look down on me if I don't — fight?" The shamed words trickled dryly out of his mouth.

"If they have sons they will." The overhanging lamp threw a shadow over his face, blotting out the lines of years behind the drug counter and leaving a dark oblong out of which eyes glowed hotly.

Philip lowered his head. He knew the face before him was the face he would meet everywhere on the street. Everything was bared to *will you fight or not*. Everything was stripped from him, except that. When a man like Charles Kirby turned against him, there would be no sanctuary anywhere. In the silence he heard, outside in the deepening dusk, a muffled tramp in the dirt street.

The two men exchanged a quick glance, turned together to the door. A black body of men moved down the centre of the street. Their steps swung in rhythm and a murmur of voices rose above it like a dark melody. Boot nails clanged on the flagstone crossing and the column of men moved into the flare of the street light. Philip saw brass buttons gleam on double-breasted coats, saw

striped pants in shining boots, and he saw the glory of gold braid on the sleeves and cap of an officer.

"The Howitzers! The Howitzers! The Howitzers goin' to drill."

A window screeched open across the street. A young girl leaned out and threw down a bright piece of silk. It caught in the light breeze, fluttered open, and against the street light the crimson flag of secession waved as it floated down toward the reaching hands of the artillerymen. They were yelling, and other windows opened and more voices yelled, men and women, and then Charles Kirby was yelling with them. Philip saw his face clearly now and it was n't tired. Passion filled his eyes and his voice was strong.

It will be like this everywhere now, Philip thought.

Hooray! Hooray! Dixie, Dixie, Dixie!

"The power confided in me will be used to hold, occupy and possess the properties and places belonging to the government . . . but beyond what is necessary for these objects there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere." — *President Lincoln in his inaugural address, reiterated to the Virginia peace commissioners three days before his call on the state for troops*

In the gray stone Georgian mansion of Dinwiddie Wade, on Franklin Street, three men lingered over their brandy in the dining room. The ladies had retired to the upstairs sitting room. The April evening was warm and the French doors opened on the balcony. Gray columns were limned against the Southern sky. Shadows from the brick slave quarters lay softly in the walled garden and a river breeze filled the room with the fragrance of spring flowers.

Dinwiddie Wade shook the short ash off his Havana and watched with approval the man he wanted for his son-in-law. Dennis

Leatherbury was big and he was solid; his shoulders were like an ox yoke and he had the head to go with them. His massive jaw was thrust forward and he crouched as when he put a hunter at a fence. He talked as he rode, with a fierce drive, and that took courage, too, when the man he was driving at was old St. George Paxton.

The eyes of the ancient beau glittered like his diamond studs. They were the most emotionless eyes Dinwiddie had ever seen in a man's face. And that parched, high-bred face might have been a mummy's, for the emotion it reflected. Above his face, dyed black hair showed streaks of blue and purple in the light of the chandelier. His dead-white hands immovable on the polished table, St. George Paxton listened to the angry voice of Dennis.

"But my family bought slaves from the North in good faith—we all did. All the money that my family has accumulated in two centuries in Virginia is invested in slaves. Now they want to wipe out our investment. Suppose we told them we didn't like their machines—we wanted them abolished." He poured it out in one gust and paused for breath.

In that slight pause, St. George spoke gently.

"My dear young man, this antagonism between the sections has nothing to do with slavery. It's as old as the country and has existed since the first American Congress. It's an economic struggle pure and simple. To grow rich the North must pass certain laws—tariff, for instance—harmful to the South. As new states enter the Union, north of the Missouri Compromise bounds, they give the North the political power to pass these laws. The Southerners foresee their subservience to the North and want to withdraw. The North needs the South's subservience for their complete financial success, and they won't allow us to withdraw. The slavery question is merely a convenient flag to wave, and some abolition fanatics have conveniently waved it."

Dinwiddie saw that Dennis was puzzling over an answer. He glowered at the old gentleman and downed his brandy. Dinwiddie came to his rescue.

"I don't think it's that simple, Saint. There's a lot of hate behind this. Don't forget that in the North they've had to break their backs in toil and sour their lives in money grubbing, and they've developed a harsh philosophy which values only the dollar. They're bound to resent our easy-going attitude and our pleasures, and our very slaves which make them possible. The way they martyred this John Brown showed their resentment. They must hate us very deeply to make a hero out of a maniac who wanted to murder us in our beds."

"That's it!" Dennis was on sure ground again. "That's why they're always getting our slaves to run away. They don't know anything about niggers. I wish the woman who wrote that *Cabin* book had a bunch of sweating niggers around her neck. She and her Uncle Tom . . . when I think of the scoundrels I've nursed through sickness and have them loaf and steal and run away —"

"They're an ungrateful lot right enough and a poor investment." St. George again moved easily into Dennis's pause. "We'd be better off if we had our investments in the North's machines, and we might do that yet if we stay out of the Confederacy and this war."

"Stay out of the Confederacy!" Dennis blurted.

"We belong with the Confederacy." Dinwiddie spoke quickly. "That's our common culture. God knows, I opposed secession at first, but now that the fat's in the fire and they hate us so much, I don't see how we can stay out of a war."

"We'll stay out of the war by staying out of the Confederacy." The old beau shifted slightly, reaching for his brandy. "Virginia is not a large slaveholding state and we're getting more and more away from it. Richmond here is a growing city that does n't depend on slavery at all. But if we allow our passions to rule us and go into a long war, this state will be set back two generations."

"Those Yankees won't fight any long war," Dennis said. "As soon as they see we mean business they'll quit. Besides, Lincoln said there would n't be any invasion."

"Can you tell me how Mr. Lincoln can retake the Customhouse here in Richmond from his seat in Washington? Of course there'll be a war, and we're in no position to fight an established country. They've got too much money and credit. They have munitions, factories, and plants we know nothing about. All we have is land and niggers. We haven't even postage stamps."

"We had even less when we fought England!" Dennis spluttered.

"England was half-heartedly fighting for some colonies. The Yankees are fighting for their dollars."

"And that's where we'll beat them," Dennis shouted. "While they've been mucking for those dollars we've been making men of ourselves. I'd take on any ten of those nigger lovers."

Dinwiddie smiled at the gleam of anticipation in Dennis's eyes.

"I'm afraid that's the test, Saint," he said; "our men against their money. And I agree with Dennis there. I've a young wildcat named Brose Kirby as my shipping clerk, and I'll put him, too, against any ten Yankees."

St. George Paxton carefully replaced his glass and spread his veined hands.

"Well, gentlemen, you've put passion in the saddle and I'm afraid you'll ride Virginia into a fall. It would be wiser to furnish Lincoln with his troops for subduing the South. What have we to gain by going with the South? Naturally they want us—for prestige and resources and man power. But what, in the name of God, do we get out of it?"

Dennis choked, pushed back his chair.

"Loyalties, Saint," Dinwiddie said as quietly as he could. This discussion was going too far.

"An anachronism." The old gentleman smiled faintly. "That's an ideal of this culture of ours you talk about. The rest of the country is too practical for such mediæval trappings and we'd serve our state much better by following the main chance, too."

"By God, Mr. Paxton, you sound like a Unionist to me!" Dennis was standing, his chin thrust forward.

"Mr. Leatherbury, I'm a banker and I don't want to see our state become subservient to the North or our children poor relations of the Union."

"We don't need bankers now. We need loyal Virginians, and if you were my age —"

"Dennis!" Dinwiddie, too, was on his feet.

St. George waved wearily to his host. "I don't mind the young man's impetuosity, Dinwiddie. I'm an anti-secessionist, yes, but if we join the Confederacy, I am a loyal Virginian. As such, I'll offer my banking talents to the new country, and I assure you, Mr. Leatherbury, they will be very much needed."

"I'm sure they will, Saint." Dinwiddie glanced at Dennis.

The young man stood sullenly, looking down at the table. When he felt Dinwiddie's gaze he raised his eyes. A flush spread over his tanned face. Then he lifted his head, drew himself erect, and bowed stiffly. The sullenness left his face and there was a gallantry on him then that moved Dinwiddie.

"I'm sorry I lost my head, Mr. Paxton. I apologize." The old beau nodded and Dennis bowed to Dinwiddie. "I apologize to you, Mr. Wade."

Dinwiddie bowed in return, suppressing a smile. Despite Dennis's bad temper, he liked the fellow's spirit. That would be a son-in-law for you — one to use the strong rein that Mildred needed.

In the silence he grew aware of a rising clamor of voices on the street. Their own voices no longer filled the room, and now the dark sound rolled in. St. George glanced at the two men and slowly rose. Even now his detachment was undisturbed as he joined them on their way to the balcony.

They walked to its edge and leaned over the rail. Across the front lawn they saw a crowd spilling into Franklin Street. Windows were flung open and flags waved out. A red glare of pine torches lit the sky farther up the street and its reflection touched the people like a stain. The rushing wave of sound swept down the street and those in front of the house joined in and threw it back. It gathered, a mounting howl, a high hot wind.

Down with the tyrant . . . remember our motto . . . Sic Semper Tyrannis. . . .

The glare brightened and a secession flag waved in it. The cheering rolled over the three men.

In Dixieland I'll take my stand, to live and die in Dixie . . .

New uniforms shone in the milling crowd as the red glare brightened and caught the glint of buttons and gleam of sabres. In the distance a bugle blared.

Away, away, away down south in Dixie. . . .

CHAPTER II

"The declared purpose of the Union from which we have withdrawn was to . . . 'insure domestic tranquillity . . . promote the general welfare' . . . and when, in the judgment of the sovereign states composing the Confederacy, it has been perverted from the purposes for which it was ordained . . . a peaceful appeal to the ballot box declared . . . the government created by that compact ceased to exist."—*President Davis on his inauguration*

Her father said the city had gone mad and Dennis said it showed how the people felt. Mildred did n't know what to say. All that she felt was that she must be mad herself. Here she was in this mob, which was strange enough, but it was fantastic to be part of it. And she was. Her father and Dennis were not.

Her father was excited, she could tell that. Not many years ago he had been a great beau, and he had the color of a dandy to-night. Mildred had never seen him so handsome and so young. But he was aloof from the crowd, enjoying it as he would at a Fair. Dennis too was enjoying it in his own way. Head thrust forward, his powerful body rode the crowd with the same zest as when he rode in a steeplechase. But she was as detached from Dennis and her father as they were from the crowd.

She alone had lost herself in the mob, felt their violent release, their rumbling passion. Never in her life before had she lost herself. It was frightening when she remembered that only an hour ago she had been talking with her mother in their upstairs sitting room, and all these people and their emotions had been unknown to her.

Old Mrs. Paxton had been quietly dozing, while they waited for

the gentlemen, and her mother had been talking of Dennis Leatherbury. At dinner he had told them that, now the ordinance of secession was passed, he would soon be gone with the Richmond Light Infantry Blues. After dinner he would surely propose, her mother had said.

"And it's high time you were settling down, Mildred. You're nineteen now and you can't keep flitting from one dandy to another. Already there have been too many of those."

"Yes, there have been a lot, but . . ." She looked at the young-girl loveliness of her mother. "Tell me, Mother, when you married Father did you give up a feeling that there was something waiting for you, that you did n't know exactly what it was, but you felt it was something different from what you'd ever had — and —"

"Oh, Mildred, that goes with youth. We all give up that. But you find a deeper love. And Dennis is the man for that. He has more than all your dandies. Did you ever see such a physique? And that head — it could have been sculptured. And let me tell you something else. You'll like having that plantation a few miles out of town much better than living in the city all the time. I know we have a wing reserved at Kensington, but they're your father's family and it's not like your own place. Dennis spends a good deal of time on his horses and his steeplechasing, but he's made a fine plantation. And nothing will quiet all these yearnings of yours like being mistress of that place. In time you'll remember them as the foolishness of your youth."

"Yes, I suppose they are foolish. Maybe I should have given them up long ago." She had said that, but her sense of expectancy did not accept her words. Now, here, in the violence of the crowd, even the words and all the life they evoked seemed dim and without meaning.

Secession . . . secession . . .

Jagged teeth in a strange, tangle-bearded face laughed into hers. She felt her own laughter flung back. She could not hear it in the bedlam. A bent-shouldered giant in greasy working clothes threw his arm about her father, and Dinwiddie Wade smiled and touched

his beaver. A slender girl with impudent eyes hugged Dennis and laughed merrily at his shy grin. On the sidewalk a fiery Southern Cross blazed. The mob voice bellowed. *Secession . . .*

They reached the foot of Franklin Street. Behind them a dark, dense mass, swaying in the glare of pine torches, stretched back as far as she could see on the old streets of Church Hill. Every house had been lighted there and in poor homes a single candle burned. Ahead the screaming crowd choked Franklin Street hill. *Secession . . .*

Mildred saw why her father called them mad. Their wild emotion was like new love, abandoned and intense. She felt it running through her, like desire. Crimson flags waved. Men and women kissed the flag and then they kissed each other. She envied their release. A trumpet blared and carried their voices into the singing red night. Her own lifted with them.

I wish I was in the land of cotton . . . Old times there are not forgotten . . .

The mass thickened and they moved more slowly. New uniforms splashed in the crowd. Her father pointed out a fellow member of Company F, fire-gilt buttons gleaming on his gray frock coat and his patrician face red with shouting. Dennis yelled to a laughing young man in a Blues uniform, his white plume waving as he swung his arms. *Secession . . .* There were boys in the shining new uniforms of Howitzers and Old Dominion Guards, of Grays and Fayette Artillery. There were men in old regimentals, with gray in their beards and lines in their faces, and they were all singing too. Between the Ballard and Exchange hotels the mass was unyielding. They were listening to a soldier on the balcony.

"That's General Ransom, of Carolina," Dennis shouted. "Let's listen."

People were pressed up on the steps of the Trinity Methodist Church and against the doors of Odd Fellows Hall. Only the ox-yoke shoulders of Dennis could squeeze openings through that pack, and Mildred moved through behind him. They struck a solid

line in front of McDonald and Lyons' tailor shop. Already bolts of cadet-gray cloth and cassimere and red-lined capes had replaced the uniforms of Knights Templars and Masons.

". . . And the old North state is ready to follow the example of the Old Dominion and pledge one more state to the Confederacy."

The crowd's swelling roar surged through her. Another speaker sprang out on the balcony, and shouted that Maryland too would follow. In Baltimore they had rioted against United States soldiers on their way to desolate Southern firesides.

"Mildred." Her father was speaking over her shoulder so that only she could hear. "This is too tiring on you. We must be getting along."

"But I'm having the most wonderful time of my life."

"I know, but . . ." He frowned and his eyes slid away from her. "Dennis! Don't you think this is too much for her?"

"Yes, I do, Mr. Wade. I reckon we should go."

She turned to Dennis. He looked as though he had just tasted something unpleasant and did n't want to mention it.

"But not yet," she said. Then she smiled at him, lowering her lids and giving her eyes an expression she had learned at fifteen. "Let's hear what this speaker has to say."

"Well . . ." He gazed helplessly at her father.

What could be bothering them? She glanced over the people near them.

". . . And Virginia gave those colonies the leader who freed them from England and who, as their first President, led them out of the morass of their confusion. In the formative years of those independent colonies, Virginia gave them Presidents for thirty-two years out of their first thirty-six, and among them Jefferson, who formed their principles of democracy. This very city gave them Marshall, who formed their principles of law. Virginia gave them Lewis and Clark, who opened the West, and we gave the colonies that new land—our land. Now foreign immigrants overrun that land. Now some of the original colonies have become dollar

worshippers and haters of our democracy. Now those money colonies and those foreigners, who enjoy the land we gave them, have formed an alliance. This alliance tells us that we cannot secede from *the* Union. What union, may I ask, have they ever had with Virginia? When Washington said, 'My country,' he meant the Dominion of Virginia. That is *our* country, the only country from which we cannot and would not secede. . . ."

In the bellow that arose, the milling crowd shifted in front of her. Suddenly Mildred saw why her father and Dennis wanted to leave. She had never seen one of those young women before. Yet she knew they belonged in those crooked streets that ran at all angles behind the Exchange. She would have known without the bewildered concern of her father and Dennis. They were pretty and not as coarsened as she had been led to believe. One of them was beautiful. She was young, and the loveliest red-gold hair Mildred had ever seen was knotted low on her neck above a cape of lace. There was an arrogance on that girl that had nothing to do with birth or position. That arrogance came from sureness. She lived the passion and abandon of this mob.

It was in her eyes as she looked at the young man with her. The surrender in her face was something Mildred had always wanted to feel, and never had. She glanced at the dark young man standing beside the girl. Then she stared. Never in her life had she seen anyone like him. He was not the sort of young man she met, but you would n't meet him anywhere. He belonged only to a night like this.

Looking at them, carefree and glowing, she suddenly resented them. This night of abandon was nothing new to them: they lived its spirit all the time. That young man knew no unfulfilled urges, no restraints. The way his head was carried on his shoulders, his dark brown hair thick and long on the back of his neck, was like a defiance to everything she knew. Yet she could n't take her eyes from him.

"Dennis!" Her father called across her. "There's an opening. Go ahead."

Dennis took her arm and helped her through the narrow space. It closed behind them, as the crowd started milling in a new burst of cheering.

"Wait for Father."

"You-all go on," he shouted. "I'll follow."

The dark young man and the red-haired girl were right in front of them. Dennis hesitated a moment. Then, his face tight, he bluntly put his shoulder between them and shoved. The girl was pitched forward. She caught her balance and whirled around. She was not beautiful any more. But Mildred was watching the young man. He had been shoved around, too. He came spinning back and he was as quick as a cat. Then she saw his face, lean and long, a hawk's, with hot black eyes glaring at Dennis.

"What're you trying to do?" he asked softly. Even Dennis must have sensed the lightly leashed passion in that voice, for he faltered. Then he said stiffly:—

"I was trying to clear a way for this lady, if you will be good enough to stand aside."

"Can't you be good enough to ask, instead of bumping *this* lady?"

Red crept up from Dennis's wing collar and flushed his face. Mildred knew the young man was aware that the red-haired girl was not a lady, and Dennis knew it too. He muttered, his words barely audible:—

"I'm asking you now."

"I'm asking *you* for an apology."

Dennis's chin came jutting out. "You're going too far, sir," he said thickly. "Will you please move aside?" Then, as the young man stood silently looking at him, Dennis bellowed. "You will stand aside, sir, or I'll make you." His big hand reached out and caught the other's coat by the collar.

Still the young man did not move. Only the light in his black eyes burned brighter.

"Take your hand off me," he said, very quietly.

Mildred was not surprised when Dennis's hand fell away. She

knew him for a courageous man, knew that such a famous rider as the Valley's Turner Ashby had called him a doughty horseman. But he was against a force now he did n't understand. A chill passed through Mildred. The violence of the mob was suddenly concentrated in the four of them. She could feel it close and personal and intimate, ready to explode. Dennis felt it too, only he did n't know what it was.

In that moment, her father pushed up beside her. She had never seen him so angry.

"Brose," he said furiously, "how dare you create such a disturbance in front of my daughter?"

Brose . . . So this was Brose Kirby, her father's shipping clerk. She had heard her father speak of him, and remembered that his name had evoked a mood. Now she watched him frankly.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Wade. I did n't know the lady was your daughter." There was nothing deferential in his tone, as was usual when people spoke to her father. He was polite, but bold, and Mildred knew he would not be deferential to the devil.

"Then will you please stand aside now?"

"I am waiting for an apology from your daughter's escort."

Dinwiddie Wade lost all color. His chiseled features were as cold as a statue's. He strode forward and looked as though he would strike Brose Kirby. A moment passed. Then he grew very stiff.

"I'll see you in the morning about this."

"You need n't, Mr. Wade. You know I'm joining the Old Dominion Guard."

"Brose," Dinwiddie Wade said, and his voice shook, "I could kill you."

"No, you could n't, Mr. Wade."

Her father trembled, as he tried to speak. Dennis took hold of his arm.

"Please come on, sir," Dennis said. "We can gain nothing squabbling with this fellow, and certainly he is n't worth fighting."

Brose Kirby stood very still, watching them. An older man with a gray goatee touched Dinwiddie Wade.

"You can pass through here, sir," he said. "I think it would be practical to leave now. You've scared up a wildcat."

Her father stared at the old gentleman as though he did n't see him. Dennis muttered, "Thank you, sir," and plunged through the narrow opening. Her father helped Mildred through after him. The crowd closed around them. They moved in silence.

Near Capitol Square the crowd thinned and they moved out of it into Bank Street. They stepped up on the sidewalk in front of Goddin's Hall and walked three abreast.

"What a thing to happen to-night!" Wade's voice was hurt. "I — I'm sorry, Mildred."

"Oh, don't think about it, Father. What else would you expect from a man like that?" She resented her own curiosity about Brose Kirby when she looked at what he had done to her father. Pain was deep in his face. Dinwiddie Wade was a proud man and life had always offered him homage. Now, for the first time, he looked his forty-four years and the color of the dandy was gone from him.

"That's right, Mr. Wade, it was my fault." Dennis's voice was contracted with shame. "I should n't have let the insolent fellow go unpunished."

"I'm afraid you could n't have punished him, Dennis. He's too tough."

She glanced at Dennis's sweating face and she was strangely pleased that Brose Kirby had subdued him. All that driving strength in him had floundered before those hot black eyes. Now she knew why Dennis had never touched her.

"But it was my place," he mumbled. "After all, your employee —"

"He should n't have been my employee." Her father was quieter now. He sounded tired. "He's always been irresponsible and impudent and did n't care whether he kept his position or not, but something in the boy got to me. And he was a good shipping clerk. The niggers were scared to death of him. Curious. One

of the old ones said to me once, 'That Mr. Brose, he's a black 'un.' That's what the boy is, a black 'un. I told St. George to-night that he was the kind of soldier who would win us the war. But I doubt if anybody will ever be able to handle his like."

That was what had aroused her curiosity in him. All the dandies she had known had been too easily handled. Even Dennis, who had promised so much, had become hers, too much hers. She wondered how she appeared to a young hellion like Brose. Did she seem as lovely as that red-haired girl?

Without warning the ground shook and thunder rolled down from Capitol Hill. A trumpet called and shouts lifted. In the gleam of torches on the crest, Mildred saw the sullen glint of navy guns and red jackets of artillerymen through the veil of smoke. Fire leaped from the guns' mouths and thunder shook them again. Over the Customhouse the crimson flag of the Confederacy fluttered in the night wind. The salutes roared again and again. Then the air vibrated and they smelled burnt powder on the April breeze.

"Lord!" Dennis said. "That's what war will be."

They walked slowly up Franklin Street. There would be no talk of marriage this night. The war had moved too close. She was glad. The pictures of life with Dennis were no more than the mists of smoke that floated upward through the trees.

The square outline of her home loomed dimly against the sky. A light glowed in the upstairs sitting room, breaking the shadows of the lindens. Her mother was waiting for them, with cookies and amontillado. The quiet repose of her life was waiting for Mildred to return, as though to-night had not happened. But the girl who had walked out of this lawn was not returning. She would never forget the passionate abandon of this night. As she remembered the dark, dense, swaying mob, and the sweet bugle notes, she kept seeing Brose Kirby standing in the glare of the torches.

CHAPTER III

"A war of gigantic proportions, infinite consequences, and infinite duration is upon us, and will affect the interests and happiness of every man, woman and child . . . in this country we call Virginia." — *Richmond Examiner*, April 1861

The afternoon sun, coming through the two front windows of the Kirby house, brightened the worn spot on the carpet. Originally the carpet had the other end around, and much tramping through the double doors into the sitting room had worn the spot. It was a shame Elizabeth's mother had not bought the new blue carpet, as she had planned, with new wallpaper to match. But Elizabeth's father said that business was so bad at the drugstore, what with the uncertainties over the war, that they should n't spend any money that was not necessary. So this old mulberry carpet, which should have been shifted back into the sitting room in the spring, was turned around.

Elizabeth tried lowering the shades. That hid the worn spot, but the room grew gloomy. The blue figures in the wallpaper had long since faded and in the dimness they blurred into the gray background. She raised the shades and carefully adjusted their lengths. She rearranged the tulips in the vase on the taboret between the windows. They caught the light and might attract Chester's glance. She pushed back the picture of herself with Brose and Paul, taken when they were children. She hated that picture. The big hat made her face look scrawny.

Everything else looked elegant. There was not a smear on the glass of the bookcase. The books were in even rows with a pleasant balance of color. She gazed at them proudly: Thackeray

and Sir Walter Scott, Washington Irving and Edgar Allan Poe, Tennyson's poems, and many novels. Next to the case the white paint of the mantel was spotless, and the wrought-iron andirons and poker and scuttle gleamed. Elizabeth loved this room, and so did her mother. They had worked on it as no negro ever would because every piece in it, and especially the piano, had been a personal triumph and represented history in their lives.

Always her plans for this parlor had been directed by a dream of someone appreciating her against a lovely background. *Elizabeth Kirby surely has an attractive parlor. . . .* Chester Cary was the one. No one else would have fitted. Yet a week ago the dream had been aimless and Chester had been studying for his graduation at the University of Virginia.

Then she heard his steps on the porch. They sounded different, heavy, and a tinkling sound accompanied them. She hurried into the hall and tiptoed for a quick peek in the hatrack mirror. She looked pretty. She knew she was n't. Granny had been frank enough about it. *All mouth and eyes, that child is. . . .* But in the mirror she looked pretty, for her eyes were shining and her mouth was smiling. She kept the smile as she opened the door.

The smile faded. She was not aware of it until she saw Chester's face change. He had been proud and shy when the door opened, and now his mouth drooped and his eyes looked bewildered. She should not have taken away his smile. It hurt that she had. She wanted to bring it back, but no words formed in her brain. Her brain was crowded with that big uniform standing in front of her, hard with pieces of brass and leather and a revolver butt projecting from a black holster.

"What's the matter, Elizabeth? Don't—don't you like it?"

"Yes." She nodded to give the weak word emphasis. "It's beautiful."

"Does n't it fit, then?" His young face was screwed in worry as he glanced down at the soft blue-gray fabric. "Peter Spilman is a good tailor."

"Yes. It fits fine . . . and the boots look nice too."

"I had them made at Alexander Hill's." He looked at them. "He gave me the spurs as compliments."

"I was kind of surprised." There was n't so much brass. On the belt around his waist was a big buckle with "VA" on it.

"You knew I was going to get it to-day." He looked at her.

"I reckon I'd forgotten about it. Now you'll go, won't you?"

"I reckon so, Elizabeth. . . . On the morning train, I'll go."

"You do look handsome in the uniform, Chester," she said quickly. "I was used to seeing you without one — with Brose and Paul in theirs — and it gave me a turn."

"That's what it was, I reckon. You-all have been mighty fine to me and I'm going to miss you."

"We'll miss you too, Chester."

"It was a fine week we had, the finest of my whole life."

"Was it?" She looked up at him eagerly. Then she lowered her eyes. "I had a fine time too."

"Just think, we would n't ever have met if Dad had n't sent me to your Uncle Virginius for advice on what cavalry to join, and he had n't sent me to Brose for him to show me something about the army. You know, Elizabeth, that seems a long time ago."

"And it was just a week." It was just the time between his asking advice and leaving for Harper's Ferry, between her empty dream and his going out of her life.

"I'd like to write you, Elizabeth. I wonder if you'd write me."

"I certainly will, Chester." She could n't look at him now. . . .

"I reckon I'd better call Brose and Paul."

"It's lucky your Uncle Virginius can get them off in the afternoons."

"He said this is the last time." She moved back into the hall and called up the stairs.

The boys appeared almost instantly. They still looked big and strange in their uniforms. Paul came bounding down the stairs and Brose walked behind him. Paul shouted his admiration for the new uniform. Brose said:—

"You look like a soldier now."

Elizabeth went upstairs for her things, remembering her words. *This is the last time.* . . . She put on her new bonnet, small, with flowers on the top, and watched the image in the mirror. The eyes were large and grave. Now she was all eyes and mouth. But, Granny used to say, if you can't be pretty you can be sweet. That was no solace now. The image receded as she backed out of her door.

Downstairs the uniforms filled the hallway. Chester had never seen the parlor. It didn't matter. She walked slowly down the stairs, waiting for them to see her. She could not break in against their hearty voices rolling together. Then Chester glanced upward. He moved quickly between her brothers and held out his hand. Brose did not see. He turned to fit on his kepi. Paul was watching and he grinned happily.

She walked between Paul and Chester as they left the house and turned to Broad Street. Brose was on the outside. Of the three boys, he alone was already a soldier. He belonged in that gray uniform with the striped trousers ending in shiny boots. But Paul was studying hard to become a gunner and up at Harper's Ferry Chester too would become a soldier. And no more would the three of them fare forth through the city and watch it arm and sing and dance to "Dixie."

No more would she see the city as it had been last week. Now uniforms were everywhere. Even the store windows—James Chenery and Valentine, Crenshaw, where she used to shop with Mother for drygoods—were filled with gray cloth and cassimere and material for knapsacks. Could she make something for Chester?

"Look at those United States soldiers over yonder at the depot!"

Across the street, in front of the R. F. and P. Depot, men in dark blue milled among the civilians that always crowded the depot these days, fleeing Richmond.

"They're soldiers who've resigned from the United States Army and are going home," Chester said. "Like Colonel Lee."

"Uncle Virginius saw Colonel Lee after they gave him command of the Virginia forces," Paul said. "He's a handsome man."

"He was the best soldier in the United States Army. They offered him command of their whole army."

"He would n't fight against Virginia."

"Who would?" Chester asked scornfully.

"Winfield Scott is."

"He's all fuss and feathers anyway. My dad says better they have him."

"Well, let them have him," Brose said. "Who'll have some ice cream with me at Pizzinni's?"

"Have it with me. This is my last day." Chester turned to her, smiling, and it hurt all through her.

"All right, Chester," Paul said. "But remember, Brose, you owe us one."

When they reached the confectioner's, Paul whispered:—

"Look! Here comes our artillery instructor. He's Major Jackson from V.M.I. and he brought the cadets down to drill us."

Elizabeth had never seen such a stern man. The lower part of his face was covered with a brown beard, and blue eyes flashed from under the stiff brim of a cadet cap. Standing in the sweet coolness of the store, they watched his rigid back.

"Is that the kind of man who drills us?" Chester was awed.

"He's the strictest, but he's leaving for the army at Harper's Ferry."

"He's a fine-looking man." Brose watched him with a glow on his face.

Elizabeth heard faint brass music, then a distant shout and dim cheering.

"A parade," she cried. "Let's watch it." Anything would serve to break this mood, to release her from their casual cheerfulness. Only she seemed to suffer for the approaching end of their little unit of life.

They hurried down Eighth Street. Crowds flowed in from Broad and Grace. The music sounded clearer, and cheering floated to them. They reached Franklin. A young officer on a prancing horse was waving to the gathering mass. "*That's Maxcy Gregg!*"

Sunlight glinted on the rifles of the columns that swept behind him. The people on the street were going wild. From windows ladies threw flowers and new bright flags.

"That's the First and Second South Carolina!" Brose shouted. His black eyes gleamed. "They're the heroes of Fort Sumter."

The heroes of Fort Sumter. They have captured a United States fort and have crossed two states to fight with us against the United States Army. This was secession. It was not just an argument, such as she had heard all her life, within the United States. They were not in the United States now. That was the North and the new Western states. They were in the Confederacy. *Miss Kirby, where're you from? . . . I'm from the Confederacy. . . . How romantic. . . .*

Yes, it was romantic! It was beautiful to be all one people who loved each other. These South Carolina soldiers, these people on the sidewalk and on the balconies, cheering and waving flags, they were all Southerners, all the same people. Suddenly a passionate love for them surged through her. She loved every soldier marching past, every person on this street, in Richmond, in the Confederacy. She was overwhelmed with love for Chester and her brothers because they were hers and they were Confederates.

She wanted to tell them and she turned to Chester. He was so beautiful in his youth, with his face shining like a knight of chivalry. But there was nothing to reach out to. She had known him only for a week, in an interim between his two lives: between his university and army life, his youth and manhood, his citizenship in the United States and in the Confederacy. He would go and she would never tell him.

She looked at Brose in his gray frock coat with its high braided collar and the double rows of brass buttons across his chest. He was no longer the brother who had left Mr. Wade's tobacco warehouse to join the Old Dominion Guard. He was an infantryman in Company D of the First Virginia Regiment, enlisted for one year in the provisional army of Virginia. The dark intensity of his face was moulded in the form of a foot soldier, walking hard on

his heels with a roll to his powerful shoulders, and a steel bayonet at his hip that he would know how to use. But she could not tell Brose this, any more than she could ever tell him anything. Whoever knew what passed behind his eyes? Not even Mother, who loved him most.

She looked at Paul. The double-breasted coat with the padded shoulders of the Howitzer uniform hung loosely on his big frame, not yet filled out. He looked pathetic and too young. He was too young. He had just turned sixteen. While she watched Paul, she saw him staring at the square, gray stone house where the Wades lived. A slender girl, leaning on the iron rail of the balcony, waved toward them. Elizabeth glanced around. Chester was waving to the girl. Then he said to them:—

“Will you-all come with me to see Mildred Wade? I have n’t seen her since I’ve been back.”

But Mildred Wade was the daughter of Brose’s former employer. Chester did n’t know that, perhaps was n’t aware that they did n’t know people like her.

“Sure.” It was Brose who answered, carelessly. “We’ll go with you.”

It was too late to refuse. How could he always feel so sure? Elizabeth did n’t realize that she was hanging back until she noticed Chester holding open the gate and Brose and Paul waiting on either side. The crowd on the sidewalk was thinning. The last of the soldiers were passing and the brass music drifted back from Capitol Square.

Hooray . . . Hooray . . . Hooray for the bonnie blue flag. . . .

Elizabeth passed through the gate with dragging steps and saw Mildred Wade descending the iron stair that curved from each side of the balcony. Many times before she had seen Mildred Wade descend those steps, to enter a waiting carriage, while a butler stood like a guardian in front of the white paneled door. She had never thought to see that girl descend those steps to greet her.

She walked with a touch of arrogance. Cool and imperious she seemed to Elizabeth. Yet, as she drew nearer, there was nothing

cool or aloof about her. There was an eagerness in her. It seemed as if she were expectant, of something she had never had. Then Elizabeth saw her eyes, and she knew a sudden hopelessness. They were slate gray, and smoky, and they gave a strange impression of darkness against her white skin. How could she even dream of having Chester's love when he knew a girl who lived in a house like this and carried herself like a princess, and yet who had those cloudy gray eyes that would haunt a man? Mildred turned to her.

"And this is Miss Kirby? I am so glad to meet you."

Even while suffering her dismay, Elizabeth could not control a quick response that went to Mildred Wade, with that glowing smile and expectance, and those eyes that held her in fascination.

Mildred Wade was greeting Paul and then she turned to Brose. Elizabeth could not stop looking at her and she saw her change. She was saying to Brose that her father had often spoken of him, but her voice was different and so was something in her manner. She grew very still as she stared at Brose, and a long time seemed to pass. It was as if they had met before and were greeting one another secretly, without words. Quite suddenly she turned from him to Chester, and then the suggestion of intensity was gone. She seemed very gay all at once and when she spoke to Chester her voice sounded excited.

"I'm so glad I saw you. I heard you'd come home from the University and I was afraid I'd missed you. Father will be glad you stopped by."

"He's gone with Company F, has n't he?"

"No, he did n't go with them when they left for Aquia Creek. He had to stay and finish up some business at the warehouse. He's going to join them in a few days. But what are you in, with that handsome uniform?"

"I hope the cavalry," Chester smiled self-consciously. "I'm going to try to join Turner Ashby's outfit at Harper's Ferry."

"You'll love that. Dennis Leatherbury, a friend of mine, was forever talking of what a peerless horseman Turner Ashby is." Then she glanced at Elizabeth and smiled again. "But won't you-

all come in and have tea with me? I'm dreadfully lonely to-day. Father's working late and Mother is shopping for his outfit. Even I was conscripted. I had to buy him some military books at West's. Everyone seems to be reading Hardee's *Infantry Tactics* and Major Gilham's book. Are you, Mr. Kirby?" She turned to Brose as suddenly as she had turned away.

"No. I'm just a private. I don't have to know anything."

Again Elizabeth had the curious impression of some communication passing between her brother and Mildred Wade, something which only they understood. Then the girl glanced toward Paul.

"You have?" she smiled.

Paul was watching her with wide eyes. He stammered, flushing.

"*Instructions in Field Artillery*. It's translated from French."

"I thought yours was a Howitzer uniform. I hear you boys at the Baptist College camp have been stealing into Schad's beer garden."

"Not any more." He grinned shyly. "They've got a board fence around the whole camp."

"Then perhaps you would enjoy some tea instead?" She turned to Elizabeth. "Won't you-all come in?"

Elizabeth's mouth was dry. If only she knew how to refuse! She tried to think of something and then she heard Brose say carelessly:—

"Thank you. We'd like to."

Mildred Wade had been talking for him all the time. It was all very strange, but now there was nothing to do except go in. She walked with Mildred up the curving iron steps and glanced at the tall, wide windows. Nights and nights she had watched their glow when she and Mother and Papa walked Franklin Street and wondered about the life behind the stately façade. Now she would know.

As she entered the high-vaulted hallway, she was numbed by the muted splendor of the house. She walked up a curving staircase and glimpsed a parlor through an arched doorway. Upstairs they went

to the front of the house and Mildred showed them into an immense oblong room. There were soft wing chairs and ottomans, a sofa between front windows, and brass candlesticks on inlaid tables at either end. Brass gleamed in the fireplace, and on the black-marble mantel were girandoles and ostrich eggs, and Dresden cups and saucers with blossoms hand-painted on them. At the other end of the room, light fell dimmed through ivy vines on shelves of musty leather books.

This was their sitting room. Elizabeth remembered her own parlor which she had so wanted to show Chester. She saw the wrought-iron tongs and andirons they had polished, the white paint they had scrubbed, the neat array of their store of books in the bookcase without a smear on the glass doors.

A dignified negro butler placed a tray beside Mildred and he served the tea in gilt-bordered *lapis lazuli* cups, and plates of thin hot biscuits with watermelon-rind preserves carved in the patterns of lace. Over the cups of tea their voices sounded and, as having no association with her, she heard their words of war. They talked of the United States firing and evacuating the Norfolk Navy Yard and the arsenal at Harper's Ferry, of strange names fitting out ships as privateers now that President Davis had offered letters of marque, of the blockade of the Southern ports and of enemy ships patrolling Chesapeake Bay.

She was thinking of this world in which Chester moved. This was where he had belonged before his transitional week and where he would return. It would be a lovely girl like Mildred Wade he would love in a room like this, in the shadow of the ivy vines and the air sweet with honeysuckle. This is where her dream would end; not in the lilac dusk of her own parlor but in the fading sun of a hot afternoon in the home of her brother's employer.

"How does it feel to have your brothers going away?"

Elizabeth felt the steady gaze and realized Mildred was speaking to her.

"I'm going to be very lonely." She tried to smile.

"That's what we women are not supposed to talk about, but I

know I'm going to miss my father. I can't imagine home without him and he thinks we shall have a real war, that might last a year or longer."

"At least a year," Chester said. "It will take that long for the two sections to prepare. If they happened to attack us now, we'd be lost. We have virtually no powder, no powdermills, no caps or cap machines."

He was so sweet in his earnestness. Why could n't her pride in him be unweighted?

"How are we getting them?" Mildred asked.

"Right now we're buying them from the North. Have n't you seen their advertisements in the papers?"

Elizabeth could not join in their laughter.

"That surely won't continue," Mildred said.

"No, but we're trying to get some from Europe before the blockade shuts down on us. And you know we've got that captured machinery at Harper's Ferry for making arms and some ammunition, and then the state armory here is making gun carriages for those guns we got in the Norfolk Navy Yard."

"You know a great deal about it," Mildred smiled.

Chester was pleased. "Mostly from their uncle, Mr. Virginius Kirby. He's in the War Office. But I've studied a lot, too."

"I should think you would hate to give up your studies, Chester."

"In a way, but my studies really led me to it. I think this break between the sections had to come, and we'll be better off when we're a separate country. What I want most of all is to be in the Confederate government when we're free. That's my real dream. Oh, I could talk for hours on my theories of government for us, but . . . anyway, the first thing is to get free."

There was a silence. Elizabeth longed to touch him then. If only she could reach out to him in some way.

"And how do you feel about it?" Mildred looked at Paul.

He shuffled in his chair and the teacup rattled.

"I—I have n't thought about it like Chester. I just wanted to join when I saw Brose in his uniform."

Mildred Wade smiled softly and hesitated. Then she turned to Brose. There was the instant change, as when she had faced him before. Elizabeth watched her smoky eyes, staring at Brose, and she sensed that he was the one she had been waiting to ask all the time.

"And do you think it will be a long war too? I'm trying to get some cheerful opinion."

"I think it could be short if we could strike them hard at first. Those people up there can't want to fight. It's the politicians."

"My father thinks they hate us."

"You have to hate a lot before you want to kill people you've never seen."

"You think that," she said slowly, "and you're willing to fight?"

Brose grinned. "I don't think. I'm a soldier now."

Their glances held and now there was no mistaking that something beyond their words was passing between them. Even Paul and Chester were aware of it. Chester glanced from one to the other while Paul perched on the edge of the sofa, fumbling with his empty teacup. Elizabeth felt her nervousness mount and all at once she was standing, holding her bag close. Mildred glanced quickly toward her. Her face was expressionless and her eyes were like a morning fog.

"I—I reckon we'll have to be going," Elizabeth said.

Mildred arose too. She smiled, but it seemed forced.

"It was very nice of you-all to come." She looked at each of them except Brose. "You will come again, won't you?"

"Thank you. I'd like to."

Brose's voice hung in the silence. Paul and Chester looked down at the floor. Elizabeth could not move. Mildred Wade looked at Brose and her eyes widened. They were frightened as she stared up at him. Then she said in a flat voice:—

"I wish you would."

Brose bowed. He gave a half smile. He seemed to be mocking the girl. Elizabeth had never understood her brother; now he seemed a stranger. Then, at last, they were leaving the house and

the atmosphere cleared. Outside, the strange encounter of Brose and Mildred Wade was forgotten. When they turned silently up Franklin Street she remembered that Chester was walking beside her for the last time.

To-morrow at some unknown town he would be cheered as they had cheered the South Carolina troops to-day. Here in the fading afternoon, where the air was fragrant with lindens and the gardens were blossoming, she would walk this street again and see people strolling and the carriages moving past. The war was not the reality, but the knowledge that Chester would not be with her.

"The war will mean a lot to people like the Wades," Chester said in the lengthening silence. "They're one of the few large slave-holding families in Virginia. They have a tobacco plantation on the river that was one of the largest land grants in the state. Around 1660, I think. This Richmond branch came here after the Revolution to handle the storage and shipping. But I think they handle tobacco from other planters, too."

"They do," Brose said dryly. "I worked there until last week."

"You did?" Chester looked incredulous. "Then you had met Mildred before?"

"No. Mr. Wade never mixed business with pleasure."

"Did n't you think him a fine person?" Chester tried to hide his embarrassment.

"He was a pleasant boss."

"He was a great beau," Chester said weakly.

They turned into Fourth Street and stopped at the white painted fence around their short lawn. Brose abruptly offered Chester his hand. The boy grasped it and looked at Brose with deep emotion in his face.

"You've been wonderful to me. I don't know how to thank you —"

"Don't. Be a good soldier. I'll see you at the opening battle."

As Brose turned away, Paul thrust out his big, bony hand.

"Well, Chester, I reckon I'll see you there, too."

"I hope so, Paul. I hate to have to say good-bye."

"Don't," Paul said in shy imitation of Brose. "So long." He bounded up the wooden steps after Brose and followed him through the door.

If only she could have gone with them. Alone, the moment swelled and she felt scared and forlorn.

"You know I hate worst of all to tell you good-bye, Elizabeth. I—I'll write you right away. You will write back, won't you?"

"I will, Chester." Then her voice choked and she knew she could n't say any more. "Good-bye." She moved toward the steps and called over her shoulder, "Take good care of yourself."

"I will. Good-bye, Elizabeth. Be sure and write me now."

She closed the door quietly behind her and tiptoed toward the stairs. In the sitting room Brose and Paul were laughing with Granny.

"That's a fact, Granny," Paul said. "Brose is going to write Mildred Wade and ask for to see her."

"This war's made you all crazy. Not that Brose wa'n't anyhow."

Elizabeth ran up the stairs. She heard her father's voice low in her mother's room at the front of the second floor. In her room, on the top floor, the shadows lay close and warm under the eaves. She fell across her bed. Why did they all seem so sad? Sobs wrenched her body. Dusk closed over the room as she wept and wept for the overwhelming sadness of all their living days.

CHAPTER IV

"We protest solemnly in the face of mankind that we desire peace at any sacrifice save that of honor and independence; we seek no conquests, no aggrandizement, no concession of any kind from the states with which we were lately confederated; all we ask is to be let alone; that those who never held power over us shall not now attempt our subjugation by arms."—*President Davis in his message to the first provisional Confederate Congress, April 29, 1861*

She was spoiling her father's leave-taking. Bad enough it was for him that he had n't left with his company. She had come with him then to see his fellows of Company F leave with the Blues, and she had told Dennis good-bye. The cars of the soldier train had been packed with new uniforms, and laughing, familiar faces leaned out of every window. There were flowers around their necks and cakes and fried chicken in their fingers.

Broad Street was crowded and flags waved from the stores. Children and girls and boys, old men and old ladies, and women of all ages had walked up and down along the cars, kissing and touching hands and throwing flowers. Negroes appeared everywhere with big platters of cookies and cakes and ham and chicken. The company bands had played and there was a bedlam of voices. *Good-bye . . . good-bye . . . good-bye. . . . Bring me back some Yankees. . . . Be careful of wet ground in camp. . . . Write for anything you need. . . . Be sure and write your mother, son. . . . Good-bye . . . good-bye . . . good-bye. . . .*

Now the three of them, her mother, father, and herself, stood alone on the sidewalk in front of the R. F. and P. Depot. Scattered

clumps of travelers huddled at the doorway, peering up Broad Street for the train. They watched Dinwiddie Wade with hostile apprehension, as if he might attack them before they fled the city. Their bags were stuffed with hastily packed belongings. Their pockets bulged with gold hastily collected on their investments. Not another soldier was in sight. Civilians on Broad Street hurried about their business, and the stores waited for trade. In the distance came the *vroom — vroom — vrom-vrom-vrom* of the drums that rolled incessantly, day and night. But no bands played.

"What a time to have this happen," her mother said. "The day your father is going away to war."

She was almost tearfully disappointed. She had dressed gayly, as for an excursion, and now the farewell was bungled and not at all romantic.

"I'm sorry," Mildred said as quietly as she could.

"I don't want you to be sorry." Her father was flushed. Rivulets of sweat trickled under the stiff brim of his cadet-gray cap. "I want you to do something so that Brose Kirby will never have the audacity to write you again."

"I told you I would."

"Yes," Mrs. Wade said, unconvinced, "but if this can happen before the war begins, after these clerks have been in battles they'll expect to be invited to dinner."

"Oh, it's not that, Isobel. The boy's family are nice enough people. His uncle's a lawyer, a good friend of Chevalier Cary, and he was very nice to Chester, Chevalier told me. It's the fellow himself. He's just a young hellion and that's all there is to it."

"That's what I mean, Dinny. It's not just this Brose Kirby. Mildred's gotten so she wants nothing but excitement. No one of her own kind satisfies her any more. She's been different ever since she first saw him Secession Night. Oh, it's all because of this dreadful war. I know something will come up when you're away."

"Nothing will come up," Mildred said wearily.

"The thing you ought to do is to marry Dennis," her father said. "I'd feel a lot better, too."

"I can't marry Dennis. Now, please, let me alone."

"Oh, if only this had n't happened just when you were going away," Mrs. Wade wailed. She could n't understand how her dramatic moment had been missed. She had been all ready to be brave and beautiful. She was beautiful, but wistfully so, like a young girl all dressed for a party that had been postponed.

"I'm glad his note came before I left."

"If only it did n't make you forget something. Let me look through your knapsack."

"No, no, I've got everything!" But Mrs. Wade was already behind him, opening the separate compartments of the red and white calfskin-covered box. It was imported from Paris and very handsome.

Mildred saw her father compress his lips. Always he protected his wife against hurt feelings. As he submitted, the hot flush on his face deepened. He shifted once the black cloth overcoat hanging over his arm, its cape flapping down. Then he grew rigid. He would not reveal to strangers his embarrassment, even though sweat streamed from under his new cadet cap, bright with its fire-gilt buttons and its large "F" in front. The buttons shone on his frock coat and the morning sun played on the gold braid of his sleeve and collar. Mildred was very proud of her father then, as he remained a soldier in spite of his wife's droning off the items of his knapsack.

". . . Fatigue jacket, white gloves, — two pairs, — three drawers, three undershirts, three white shirts, six linen collars, two neckties, white vest, four pairs of socks, six handkerchiefs. . . . Now let me see that other compartment. . . . Soapbox, two towels, shaving kit, toothbrush, needlecase . . ."

Up Broad Street the train whistle shrilled. The civilians straightened and nervously gathered their bags.

"That's all right, Isobel," her father said gently. "Close it up now."

"But I don't see your gaiters and your — that thing for your head."

"Havelock. You can send those."

Mrs. Wade fumbled with the straps. The train rolled heavily along the tracks down the centre of the street. The civilians moved away from the depot to the curb.

"Let me see!" Mrs. Wade fussed with the things strapped outside the knapsack. "Here're your two blankets and oilcloth, and your canteen and extra shoes—"

"That's all right now, Isobel. The train is here. Have you got it fastened?"

The cars ground and banged to a stop in the middle of Broad Street. The civilians hurried toward them, casting wary glances at soldiers riding past.

"There! It's fastened. Have you your Bible?"

"Yes, in my pocket."

Mrs. Wade stepped in front of him. For a moment she faced him, trying to speak. "Oh, Dinny!" She threw herself against him.

His free arm went closely around her. His face was firm. The suppressed impatience lifted. The features were strong and clear.

He was a handsome man. Her parents had been the best-looking couple in Richmond, Mildred used to think. Now the age that had lain on his face since Secession Night had grown into it, and his young good looks were gone forever.

Her mother moved away from him. Her head was bowed. Once her shoulders shook. Mildred put her arms around his neck and closed her eyes. She smelled the bay rum and the new cloth of his uniform and the heat of him. His lips brushed hers. They were as dry as dust.

He backed away and his eyes went from her to his wife. Mrs. Wade lifted her head with an effort. She looked scared and defenseless. Her lips moved before she whispered:—

"Write as soon as you can, Dinny."

"I will. Write often, both of you." He looked at each of them. "Good-bye, my darlings."

He marched out into the street. He boarded a car without a backward glance. Her mother stood there, on the sidewalk, until

the train moved off. Then she hurried down the street, to where Josiah waited on the box of the carriage. When Mildred stepped in with her mother, he started, looked around. He opened his mouth. Then he closed it and turned back. He clucked and the carriage moved along Broad Street.

Vroom — vroom — vrom-vrom-vrom . . .

Beside the railroad tracks way up Broad Street the dust rose over a solid body of gray men. The climbing sun beat down. Mildred glanced at her mother. The scared look was still on her face, and she looked as helpless as a child.

But then, her mother was a child. The outer world had never touched her. Within her small circle, of husband, family, and admirers, she had played at romance, the same light romance as when she was a young girl, and she was still just as innocent. Even now the prescience of the outer realities had not reached her; she was still a belle who had been parted from the best-looking beau in Richmond — and she had done it badly.

For two days Isobel Wade stayed in her room. That made it easy for Mildred to say nothing of her destination this afternoon. Probably her mother did n't know she was out of the house. Nevertheless Mildred felt frightened as she stepped out of the carriage at the Fair Grounds gate. Other carriages stretched a quarter of a mile on both sides of Broad Street road. Outside the fence civilians were strolling among the soldiers from other states.

Josiah look longingly at the shade of the big chestnut trees where a group of coachmen lounged. The May afternoon sun brought streams of sweat on the black man's face.

"Josiah, drive up the road and turn around and be back here within five minutes sharp."

"Yes'm." He looked downcast.

"And don't join the other carriages and talk to your friends."

"Ah doan want talk to 'em fellows."

"See that you don't."

She strolled toward the gate, trying to glimpse inside. A row of tents wilted under the sun. Uniforms moved slowly. Then she stopped. The drill ground swarmed with people. Women were everywhere and some of them would be her friends. She turned to recall Josiah. The carriage was careening down the road toward the shade.

She should have written Brose Kirby a note instead of coming here. Now that she was here she knew her father had been right, and she was tense with guilt. It was n't too late to turn back; she could walk up and down outside the fence until Josiah returned.

Several New Orleans Zouaves swaggered toward her, their blue trousers and embroidered red coats bright in the sun. Old scars lay livid on the face of the big man in front. They were the soldiers families were cautioned to bolt their doors against, the night marauders of the city streets. She moved quickly inside the gate. If any friends saw her, she could be watching the drill.

Inside the grounds, a red haze of dust lay over the milling crowd. It was more like the Fair itself. Women wore their gayest dresses. The poorer girls and women, of the kind she had seen Secession Night, brightened their clothes with sashes and kerchiefs. There were many men, mostly older, with their spring cloaks discarded, festive in light grays and shiny beavers. But war was there in the incessant rolling of the drums and the multicolored uniforms of the out-of-state soldiers. Already she recognized the Texans; and the tall, raw-boned men with leathery skins were from northern Louisiana and southern Arkansas.

The crowd was turning away from the tents toward an erect, mounted soldier who had just ridden up. He was a powerfully built man, and handsome, with black moustache and kind, dark eyes. *Let's go over and see General Lee. . . . He's the commander of the Virginia forces. . . .*

While the crowd moved toward him, Mildred suddenly turned to the row of tents. She tilted her parasol toward the people behind her, shielding her face. Every beat in her body quickened. She knew she had to see him.

V.M.I. cadets drilled a small knot of men in civilian clothes. The men looked wretched. Their coats were off and their shirts were plastered to their bodies, and their faces were blistered red. At the next row of tents men in gray uniforms lounged in the scant shade, polishing brass buckles and cleaning pipe-clay crossbelts. They were burned brown, already soldiers. A poorly dressed old lady stepped timidly up to a youngster who wore sergeant's chevrons. The artificial cherries on her bonnet bobbed as she spoke to him.

"This is Company D, ain't it?"

"Yes, ma'am. Just gettin' ready for the afternoon dress parade."

"I'm lookin' for Mr. Fitchett . . . Mr. Joe Fitchett."

"You'll find him in front of that last tent, ma'am."

This was Brose Kirby's company. Mildred took a quick survey from under her parasol. Then she stepped up to the youngster. He had bright blue eyes.

"Can you tell me where I can find Mr. Kirby?"

"Yes, ma'am. Right over yonder with them fellows around that chest."

"Thank you." She walked rapidly away from his curious gaze.

Half a dozen men sprawled around an open chest, sorting out utensils. He was at the extreme end. She saw the set of his dark head on his shoulders as he kneeled over the contents of a knapsack. Her steps slowed. She felt a blind desire to run. But her slow steps moved her closer.

His small and intimate possessions lay before her. Soap and towels, toothbrush and shaving things; they were so different from her father's. The knapsack was canvas. Its seams were strengthened with stitches of heavy red darning wool, such as a woman would make. Then she saw the needlecase. It was pale blue felt with "B K" embroidered in white on the front of it. Beside the paper of needles, darning spools, and small scissors was a blue thimble. Only a woman who loved him would have made that. Suddenly there flashed before her the image of the girl with red-gold hair standing beside him Secession Night.

Her shadow fell across the knapsack. He glanced up. For a moment he stared at her. Then he gave a slow smile and got to his feet.

"This is a nice surprise," he said.

"You — you're packing to leave camp?" That was not what she had meant to say at all.

"Any day. We're going to General Bonham on the Alexandria line."

"That's where my father is." Where were all the phrases she had planned? Where was her coolly pleasant aloofness? She had to say something. "Did your brother go to Gloucester with the Howitzers?"

"No. That was the second company. Paul's company is at Chimborazo Heights now, still drilling."

"Have you heard from Chester?"

"Yes, he's in the cavalry at Harper's Ferry all right, but not under Turner Ashby. He's under a Colonel Stuart, who resigned from the regular army."

"I'm glad he's able to be in the cavalry, anyway."

"He's very happy, he said in his letter. He's glad he's with Colonel Stuart now, he said."

She glanced away from him, trying to compose her thoughts. There was the blue felt needlecase with "B K" on it. She was looking at it and she heard her own voice. She was unaware of even forming the words, but there they were and she could never make them unsaid.

"That's a nice knapsack. It looks like a present . . ."

"My mother gave it to me. She made that little sewing case, but I don't know what I'll ever do with it." He laughed.

"Oh . . ." She couldn't raise her eyes, couldn't add another word.

"Would you like to see the camp before the dress parade begins?"

"No." She looked up suddenly. Here was the moment and she steeled herself. "As a matter of fact, I came here only to tell you that I can't see you." The stiffness of her voice steadied her.

The light was gone from his face. This was the way it should be. "I wanted to make it plain that I can't ever see you, and you're not to write me again."

"I see." His face now was as she remembered it, in the red glare of the setting sun instead of the glare of torches, and his hot black eyes stared at her as they had at Dennis. "But you could've spared yourself this trip. If you had n't answered my letter I'd have known your father would n't let you see me."

"My father had nothing to do with it."

"Then you came all the way out here, instead of writing a note, to tell me you don't want to see me." He was mocking her now, as he had mocked her father and Dennis.

"I suppose you think I did want to see you."

"Did n't you?"

She knew then the fury her father must have felt.

"Apparently you've mistaken the courtesy of a hostess for personal interest in you."

"If you'd wanted to be courteous you would have written."

"I wanted to make it plain."

"You wanted to see me," he said bluntly.

She wanted to strike him.

"If your conceit leads you to think that, I can't help it. But I want you to understand that you're not to write or try to see me again. Do you hear?"

"I hear."

A bugle sounded. The soldiers started pulling themselves up, stretching, buttoning their jackets.

"The dress parade is about to begin. Won't you stay and watch?"

"I've told you all I had to. I hope you'll have the decency —"

"Listen. I have to go now. But before I do, I want to tell you something that you'll remember when I've gone. You wanted to see me as much as I wanted to see you. You won't forget me, and you will see me again."

Dee-eee Com-pan-yay . . . Fall in!

She looked at him without answering. There were no words

for what she was feeling. The soldiers were moving up near them. She turned abruptly, hurried across the parade ground toward the gates. She was trembling. Her eyes were unseeing. The red haze of dust was thickening. Voices bellowed behind her. Then she was through the gates and there was Josiah perched on the seat, wiping his head with a red handkerchief and fanning his face with the beaver. She was in the carriage before he saw her.

"Aw, Miss Mildred, Ah coulda —"

"You may have a long rest when we get home. But get there quickly."

He mumbled. The carriage lurched and moved toward town. *You wanted to see me as much as I wanted to see you. . . . You won't forget me and you will see me again. . . .* Oh, why lie? Had she forgotten for an hour the mood of him since Secession Night? Had she forgotten an expression of his since that afternoon at home? Had the vibrance of his voice ever been out of her hearing?

Vroom — vroom — vrom-vrom-vrom . . .

Oh, those drums. . . . A solid body of uniforms ploughed through the rising dust along the railroad tracks. The Mississippi flag fluttered through the film.

"Josiah! Turn off to Franklin Street."

She closed her eyes. Drums and uniforms . . . would they remind her of him as long as this war lasted? The war would make everything topsy-turvy, her mother had said. It was already starting. At Kensington they were terrified that the slaves would rise, now that the men had already gone with Colonel Magruder to Yorktown. At home an empty house was waiting, her mother soundlessly weeping behind her door.

If there had been no war, no Secession Night, she herself would doubtless now be engaged to marry Dennis and planning life on his plantation. But Dennis was gone. Gone too were all the young men with whom she had danced, and those with whom she had shared brief romance. Instead of them was this black 'un, whom the war had flung into her life. Her father was right. She

knew nothing about such a man. But she did know that he was no young dandy for a flirtation, for waltzes alone on the balcony, a stolen kiss. He was of the violence of war itself.

In the distance she heard the note of a bugle. It evoked the image of him on Secession Night. That was his life, not hers. She had just been caught up in the abandonment and passion of that night, and all the tumult that followed. But she would forget all about him, and this strange emotion he awakened, as soon as the unnatural excitement was over. Her life would go on as before. But now, now, dear God, let the bugles blow no more.

July 1861

CHAPTER V

"They recognize the separate existence of these Confederate States by the interdiction, embargo, and blockade of all commerce between them and the United States . . . not only with those who bear arms, but with the entire population of the Confederacy. . . ." — *President Davis to the Confederate Congress, meeting in Richmond, July 20, 1861*

The limp trees were covered with dust. Heat waves shimmered upward from the street. The cloudless sky was pallid. In spite of the weather, a few people were on the street, though it was the middle of Sunday afternoon. They were waiting. In couples and groups and alone they moved slowly up Third Street from Gamble's Hill, where they had tried to find a cooling breeze from the river. They turned into Main and passed over the crest of the hill. Others, returning from the War Office, shook their heads. They were going back to their homes to wait.

Charles Kirby stood in the doorway of his drugstore and watched them. There was no sound anywhere. Even the drums were silent. It was as if they were waiting to hear the sounds of the guns themselves, waiting for the voice of the one their thoughts were with.

It would have been better if he had stayed at home to-day as Judy had begged him to. There was that old fear that if customers had to go elsewhere on Sundays for their needs they might go elsewhere during the week. And since Philip Parramore had been in the Surgeon General's office there had n't been enough business to engage another clerk. He just could n't break the custom of twenty-five years; though for all the customers to-day, he might

as well have stayed at home. That's where almost everybody else was waiting.

And he was here alone, in the tense silence of the city, without a soul to talk to, with nothing to remove his thoughts from Brose and Paul on that battlefield at Manassas.

His familiar store seemed deserted and haunted. Brose and Paul in earlier ages kept coming in, kept talking. They grew clearer as they grew younger. There was a hot day in July, like this, when they had come by for him to take them blackberry picking. They had gone down by the river, below the wharves. They had walked through Church Hill and he had showed them the house he lived in as a boy, and Bloody Run Gully which his crowd had used for breastworks in their rock battles.

Old Man Lumpkin had been his clerk then, God rest his soul. There would never be another like him. Philip Parramore had been a good clerk, but Charles had never taken to him. There was something about him that did n't ring true. Then why had he persuaded his brother to get Philip in the office of the Surgeon General? Judy had told him he should n't protect the man because he was a coward. He had said that Philip would do more good handling pharmacy supplies than a rifle. But that was n't the real reason. He had just pitied the fellow, that was all. Now, that fellow he had pitied would be posing in his gaudy clothes before the minor officials who had come to the city with the Confederate government, while his two sons were fighting a battle at Manassas. Or had been . . .

An old lady swayed around the corner. Her face was as white and damp as dough. Charles ran and took her arm, and it was only then that he recognized his wife's seamstress.

"Mrs. Fitchett. What's the matter?"

She leaned heavily on him while she gasped to get her breath. She looked up, trying to smile.

"Don't take on, Mr. Kirby. It's jest this heat. Mind if I rest a minute in yoh store?"

He helped her to the back room. The sun never touched there

and it was cool, overlooking the gardens in the rear of the Franklin Street houses. There was a rocker, and he sat her gently down.

"Now." She breathed out a gusty sigh. "If you could jest give me a glass of water, with a little lemon in it. It's my stomach—all upset."

Charles watched her a moment before he moved.

"Is it just biliousness?"

"Jest biliousness." Her breath was coming easier and she managed a smile, showing her poor teeth. "I walked from my house out to the camp to take some goodies to the soldiers from out of town, and comin' back I begun to get sick to my stomach, it was so hot. I thought I could make out all right, but passin' Grace Street Baptist Church I begun to feel faint-like. Then I got so I could hardly stand up, and I thought if I could just get to Mr. Kirby's I could last till I got home."

"I'm glad you came here, Mrs. Fitchett, but water and lemon is not what you need. Let me fix you a little stomacher and tonic."

"Oh no, Mr. Kirby, 't ain't while givin' yohself no trouble."

"You just sit there. It's no trouble at all. You should n't have taken such a long walk on a hot day like this. Must be seven miles from your house out to the camp and back." He took out his jar of powdered rhubarb and measured off twenty grains.

"I been every Sunday since Joe left. He writes me how ladies are so fine to him wherever he goes, so I want to do something for all these boys heah away from home. I know theah mothers will feel just like I do when I know ladies are givin' my Joe sweets and real home food that he don't get in that camp."

Charles had dissolved the rhubarb in peppermint water and he started mixing the liquid with a little sal volatile and tincture of gentian.

"Well now, you don't want to run yourself down so you'll be sick when Joe comes back." He poured the mixture into a two-ounce glass.

"That's what made me sick, thinkin' about Joe comin' back. That's all they're talkin' about at the camp—that battle to-day."

"You must n't let yourself worry. We'll hear about the battle soon. Here. You try this and see if you don't feel better."

She took it weakly.

"You should n't ought to do this for a nobody like me . . ."

Steps sounded in the front of the store.

"You drink that slowly now," he said, "and rest yourself. I'll have to see this customer."

It was no customer, and Charles was not pleased to see Milton Duke. Even on Sunday he wore that greasy old alpaca coat and his dirty collar was wilted. He was squinting at Charles out of cold, shrewd eyes and his mouth wore a cunning smile. Charles stood in the doorway without speaking.

"Just thought you'd like to know," Milton Duke said, "that I've gone into partnership with Mitchell and Reid, so if you want to get your drugs through a Richmond wholesaler — where you got credit — you'll still have to buy from me. And the prices are same like I give you last week — now."

"You mean by *now*, I suppose, that they're going up."

"Natchelly, what with the blockade 'n' all."

"And all you profiteers hoarding goods so you can make prices go up!"

The grin left the crafty mouth, but his eyes never changed.

"'T ain't no call to git on your high hoss, Kirby. I ain't forget how your brother talked to me when I told him I did n't want him for my lawyer no more. 'I have never been your lawyer,' he said to me. 'I have handled some of your miserable accounts and I'll be glad to be relieved of that obnoxious duty.' Mouty proud 'cause he was goin' in the War Depa'tment."

"I hope you never forget what he said to you. He gave up his law practice to offer his services to his country, and all you could think of was that he probably could n't continue to handle your puny accounts."

"Puny, huh. You Kirbys are givin' yohselves a lot of airs since this war began."

"Maybe if your son was in the army as my two are, instead of

helping you buy up stuff so you can rob people, you'd know better what we feel." As Charles spoke, the tension of the day rose in him and burst. His words spilled out. "I've been waiting here all day, and my wife at home, to hear whether either or both of my sons will be killed in this battle to-day! A poor seamstress is sick in my back room for thinking of her son in that battle and from trying to help other soldiers. And you come in here talking about your raise in prices and thinking of how much money you're going to make out of the drugs those boys fighting to-day will need!"

Milton lowered his gaze. His mouth twisted sullenly. "I did n't want no secession or no war. An' I'm goin' on tryin' to make my livin' like befoh. All I want to know from you is do you want that order you give to Mitchell and Reid at the prices I give you last week."

"Yes! Yes! Give them to me before the prices go up again. Give them to me at any price. Only, in God's name, get out of here now."

The gaunt figure turned and shuffled toward the door. Charles went back to the rear room. He was trembling.

"Did he have any news of the battle?" Mrs. Fitchett strained forward on the edge of the chair, clutching the empty glass.

Charles shook his head. He took his limp handkerchief to wipe his face.

"Wal, I reckon I'll be goin'."

"No, no. Don't go yet." He could n't bear to be alone again. "You rest there until you cool off."

She leaned tentatively back in the chair. "You been mighty nice to me, Mr. Kirby, and I know my boy Joe'll be happy when he knows. He's with your son Mr. Brose to-day. . . ." She sat up straight suddenly, and her eyes began to stare. "If he ever does know . . ."

"Mrs. Fitchett, we can't allow ourselves to think like that. It is n't right. Our soldiers have got to get the Northerners out of our state. We can only pray that God will see fit to spare our own."

She nodded and sank back in the chair again.

"Is it because they've made Richmond the capital of the Confederates that the Yankees are so set on gettin' heah?"

"I suppose that's the main reason."

"Then I wish they'd kept the capital where 't was. We had enough to be proud of, havin' Richmond the capital of Vuhginia."

"We'll be prouder still when we're the capital of the new country."

"You reckon we'll be that if we win this battle to-day?"

Charles looked at her eager eyes. "I reckon we can tell better when this battle is over."

"Oh, Jesus, when will that ever be?"

"Great Britain, when invading her revolted colonies, took possession of the very district of country near Fortress Monroe, now occupied by troops of the United States. The houses . . . after being respected and protected by avowed invaders, are now pillaged and destroyed by men who pretend their victims are their fellow citizens. . . ."—*President Davis to the Confederate Congress, meeting in Richmond, July 20, 1861*

These were the rulers of the new country, the makers of history. St. George Paxton leaned his straight chair against the side of the window and drew slowly on his cigar. The smoke drifted into the heavy cloud that lay in the office. Daylight was fading in the room, but the hot, thick air did not lighten. All the men were sweating except Attorney General Benjamin.

The Louisiana Jew sat on the window sill at the back of the room, sensuously rolling a Havana in his fat fingers. His unruffled hair billowed out over his ears and joined the thick narrow beard along his jaw line. In the dim light the black oval looked like a frame

and the blandly smiling face might well have been a picture. Calm, passionless, intelligent, he watched the other men with a detachment which St. George admired.

The coarse, pointed gray beard of Postmaster General Reagan glistened with sweat. The starched shirt was limp on his bulky chest and the wide collar had wilted flat on the velvet collar of his coat. But the Texan could not be still. His eyes wide and feverish, he stalked around the desks, waiting for war clerk Kirby to return with more reports.

The newly appointed Secretary of State was wiping his red face and running the wet handkerchief inside his collar, twitching and fidgeting, making himself hotter. St. George knew Hunter, had known him when he was Virginia's Senator to Washington. He had often noticed the man's force in his clean-shaven face, in the purposeful movements of his thick-set body. Now his body slumped like a sack of wheat and his face was a mile long.

Virginius Kirby walked in the door. All of them whirled on him. One look at his glum face and you could see he knew nothing. Yet they all bellowed at once. He shook his head.

"No further news."

"Ah," Alabama's Walker shouted, "we've lost and they're afraid to tell us." The Secretary of War looked like a sick man.

"Maybe they're trying to save the day and we still have a chance." The flabby face above the fringe of jowl whiskers belied the words of Secretary of Navy Mallory.

"No, the last news was too bad." St. George's own superior, Secretary of Treasury Memminger, compressed his pinched, pallid features.

"I won't admit we're licked!" Old Howell Cobb's voice downed the others. The Georgian had been the most hopeful all during that endless afternoon. "Don't you think they'd advise us, so we could make plans? No, they have n't been driven from the field by any Yankees. Beauregard will save the day—you'll see. The battle is probably in an indecisive stage now. It will be a draw, that's what."

They fell to talking among themselves. They gave the war clerk no further attention. On the window sill Judah Benjamin lazily puffed his Havana. Virginius Kirby slumped into his desk chair beside St. George.

He usually held himself erect and gave the impression of well-padded compactness. Now, in his rumpled light gray suit, rolls of loose flesh sagged and his stomach bulged. The former lawyer's composure was an effort, too, St. George reflected. Something within him was held on a cruel rein. That mouth, under the neatly cropped gray moustache, had not always been so thin.

Virginius Kirby reached dejectedly into a drawer, drew out a three-fourths-empty bottle of apple brandy. Two tumblers and a carafe stood on a metal tray among the papers on his desk. The carafe was nearly full.

"Will you have a nip with me, Mr. Paxton?"

"Just a nip, thank you, Mr. Kirby."

He poured three fingers for St. George and half a tumbler for himself. Shadows were filling the room. Voices droned. Virginius Kirby heaved a great sigh, sank back in his chair, and lifted his glass toward St. George with a weary gesture. They drank. The war clerk shook his head.

"If the War Department had just not listened to all their talk about no invasion, the United States could never have thrown their armies into the state and had their McDowell take Alexandria and start this 'On to Richmond' march. We're lost if we lose at Manassas to-day — you know that?"

"I think you're attaching too much importance to this battle, just because it's the first big one." St. George leaned closer, talked low. "Even if we do drive them back there, they still have other armies in other parts of the state."

"If we beat McDowell's army to-day, we can take care of the others. I've heard all this talk about McClellan being the 'young Napoleon,' but the only reason he come so far in the western part of the state is because of our own stupidity. Porterfield was a fool. And look at poor Garnett — a general, killed trying to rally a bunch

of green troops! Now, the President keeps Lee cooling his heels in the office, doing paper work, while Wise and Floyd out there bicker over their rank. Neither of them knows anything about fighting anyway. It's politics again, that's what, and if we leave those two politicians out there long enough, we'll lose the western counties altogether."

"We've lost the western counties already, Mr. Kirby. When that Wheeling convention denounced secession, they voted too strongly to become a separate state for us to have any hope of them."

"But it's against our state constitution for them to secede from Virginia."

St. George shrugged. "We're not dealing in constitutional rights now. The United States has accepted their Senators from *West* Virginia, and that's what's important. We might as well invade a Northern state as try to retake those hostile counties."

The war clerk took another drink. "We should've invaded in the first place. If they'd listened to Toombs this never would've happened. They had to wait a month before they voted Virginia into the Confederacy and another month before they voted our troops into the Confederate Army, keeping fifty thousand men inactive, while the North overran the state. Now they've lost Toombs, the only good man in this dummy cabinet." He looked around cautiously. "You know, Walker is just Davis's mouthpiece. All he does is fret and give appointments to officers, and when he should be getting men to enlist for the duration of the war, he has this six-months-and-one-year stuff. If he'd ever read a history book, he'd know the trouble Washington had with that."

"It's not the War Department you've got to worry about, Mr. Kirby." St. George glanced over the room. Everything was the same except that Benjamin had gone out. "It's mine. Mem-minger is another rubber stamp."

"I think the whole cabinet was appointed with the idea of giving a sop to each state."

"But in the Treasury Department we need a long view. They seem to believe all we have to do is to print money. We should be

borrowing gold from Europe with cotton as security. If we don't get England and France financially interested in us, we'll never get the help we need in the way of recognition as a country."

"Mr. Paxton, we've got to drive those Yankees out of Virginia before we can think of being a country. And that might happen soon. Magruder licked Butler down at Yorktown with a smaller force. If we can lick them to-day at Manassas, we can give them a taste of some 'On to Washington' stuff. When we start that, they'll admit we're a country, quick enough."

St. George leaned back, rolled the brandy around in his glass. It was the same story, no matter with whom you talked. They saw no further than their noses. Yet he had hopes of this man.

"I hear," he said, "that old Winfield Scott was going to have his Fourth of July dinner in Richmond."

"Humph. Scott's had his last dinner here—the renegade."

"A lot of us are nearing our last dinner here unless we do something to get foreign recognition. I don't understand why everyone believes we can fight alone against the world. This man Rhett on the Foreign Affairs Committee has sound ideas. He wants to give Yancey power to offer European countries something tangible for recognition, like no tariff and low tonnage. Now," he spoke pointedly to Virginius Kirby, "you know without that, this blockade will ruin us. We won't be able to get even the materials of war. But all Davis and Stephens do is make speeches protesting our rights, as if they mattered to anybody."

Virginius Kirby gave him a long, tired glance.

"Mr. Paxton, I'll agree with you that you're right on this foreign business if you'll agree that I am, on the war side. I'm against these speeches too. All they do is say that we want peace, that we are not aggressors, that we're being invaded. God, everybody knows that now. This is the time to fight and do some invading ourselves."

St. George smiled. "I will agree with you, sir." He lifted the tumbler. "Walker is no good, Memminger is no good. You should be Secretary of War and I of the Treasury."

Virginus solemnly touched the glass with his own. They drank. "God, it's hot," the war clerk said.

St. George leaned his chair back against the wall. The voices had ceased. The men looked dead with fatigue. One lamp had been lit at the end of the room, where Benjamin had been. There was Benjamin again. He had just entered. Something in the way he stood there caused everyone to look up. He watched them all, enjoying his moment.

"Gentlemen, I have come from Mrs. Davis at the Spotswood. She's just received a telegram from the President." He paused. His bland smile broadened. "It read: 'We have won a glorious though dear-bought victory. Night closed on the enemy in full retreat and closely pursued.'"

The men surged to their feet in a body. Even St. George found himself standing. There was not a sign of fatigue on a single man. No longer was Hunter's face long; Reagan's eyes no longer bulged. Walker was not sick. The men were clasping hands, murmuring, "Thank God!"

St. George realized that he was shaking and that Virginus Kirby was pumping his hand. His eyes focused on the face of the war clerk. The mask of composure had been lifted at last. Kirby was weeping hysterically.

"Great God, Mr. Paxton, we did it. We did it! We licked the United States, after all their boasts and all their sneers at us. I don't mind saying I was badly scared. If they'd broken through to-day they'd have taken Richmond in a week."

St. George nodded dully. "Now's the time to be scared. They'll know it's not going to be easy and they've invested money to keep us from seceding. Yankees won't lose money, Mr. Kirby. They'll start to fight now and you'll really see an 'On to Richmond' drive."

"There stands Jackson like a stone wall. Rally around the Virginians!" — *General Bee to his South Carolina troops, just before he was killed at the battle of First Manassas, July 21, 1861*

One of the lamps flickered again. The other was smoking badly. There was no use asking the negro boy to try to find more oil or to clean the wick. He was too tired to do anything. He had slid down the door to the floor and was asleep sitting there, his head against the jamb.

The men were asleep on their feet. Their eyes were red and running from smoke and sweat, bloodshot from lack of sleep. Since nightfall they had been working in this room of the Surgeon General's Department, these quartermasters and stewards who had come from Manassas. Their uniforms were layered with dust and plastered with dried mud, and their faces were soaked with moist mud where the sweat had run through. The hospital stewards were splashed with blood. A thick smear coated the neck of one. It was he who had stumbled over a dying Yankee soldier, moaning: "You're not going to kill me, are you? You're not going to kill me." He had given the Yankee water and the soldier had grabbed him around the neck. The Yank's hands had been bloody wet from holding his guts. "Could n't get shet of that fellow to save me," the steward had said.

Since nightfall Philip Parramore had been here, passing out pharmacy supplies. Bandages and tourniquets, bandages and splints, bandages and stimulants, bandages and . . . brandy. The men had drunk most of that. Philip had n't had a drop. When the major in charge of the office had left him here, Philip had known it was the dirty detail. He had known it was because he was the lowest rating man in the Surgeon General's Department. But he knew that this was his chance.

The wavering yellow light in the room grew sicklier. Gray crept over the window. Philip glanced toward Church Hill.

"Well, boys," he said, "morning's coming. You can get a better light."

"Damn 'f it ain't. Let's quit till daylight. This smoke's givin' my eyes hell."

"Christ, yes. Wake me up." The blood-smeared steward fell back to the floor and his eyes closed at once. He looked dead himself.

All of them lay back. The big, bearded quartermaster from North Carolina shook the Hanover County farm boy propped against the wall. His eyelids fluttered. He groaned.

"Gimme a chaw, son."

"In m' pocket." His voice was muffled; his eyelids stilled.

The big quartermaster bit off a piece and stuffed it back in the boy's pocket. Along the wall a steward began to snore. He was lying on his back. His mouth dropped open. Blood was clotted in the mud of his short jacket. The snoring sounded like a death rattle. The big fellow fixed him with bleared eyes and chewed vigorously. Then he tensed himself, leaned forward, spat. The juice skimmed over the steward's nose, splashed on the wainscoting. The steward jerked his head up. He peered through his thick, reddened lids.

"What's 'at?"

"Turn over. You're on yoh back."

The steward turned over. The juice trickled off the wall on his sleeve. The bearded Carolinian chewed placidly. His eyelids drooped, his head fell forward. His jaw sagged open. His breath puffed thickly through the cud. He slept. Over by the door the negro boy was lying on his belly. His white teeth shone and his lips quivered when he breathed.

Philip was the only one in the room awake. The blackness had rolled back from the whole sky in the east, and it was a dirty wet gray. He turned out both lamps. His eyes blinked from the smoke and sleepiness. So tired he could hardly stand, he yet wanted this night never to end.

This was power. This was glory. This was the first time in his twenty-eight years he had been at home, the first time he and his environment had been one. There was no pose to keep up, no false life between himself and reality. He was just what he appeared to be. The elation and release of it had the unreality of intoxication. During the fantastic night he had periodically been sobered with a start, and for a panicky moment he had believed that he was only acting another pose and that he would be discovered.

He looked down at his tailored gray tunic, with the black stripes of the Medical Corps on collar and cuff, and he smiled there in the sickly light. There were streaks of dust on his tunic and trousers and a spot of blood between two of the shining buttons. His hands sweated grime and blood. Looking at the sleeping men, he wiped his hands on his coat. It made him look more battle-worn, like those men sleeping, who had been staggering in since nightfall from Manassas.

Naw, I ain't goin' to kill you. . . . Turn me loose! Turn me loose. . . .

Philip whirled. The men started up, their eyes staring and trying to focus. The scream was gurgling from the blood-smeared steward. A quartermaster shook him. The hand was black with battle smoke. The steward opened his eyes. He moaned softly.

"Reckon I was dreamin'," he said sheepishly.

"By Gawd, I reckon we all was."

"Jesus, man, let us sleep."

Philip cleared his throat.

"Boys, you'd better get back to the packing if you want to make that morning train."

"Aw, the hell with that train."

The negro was standing, looking at the bloody steward with wide white eyes.

"Willie, go out and get a pail of coffee," Philip said sternly. "Now get it and don't ask me where. And be quick."

The men climbed wearily to their feet. The packing started again. Philip sorted the piles, the men bundled them. Four of them packed their bundles on a stretcher, two of them took the

stretcher up Ninth Street to the R. F. and P. Depot. Willie brought a pail of coffee. They drank it out of their canteens without stopping the packing. Philip had a water tumbler full. The room got lighter, but no sun came. The air was hot and sticky. He was soaked, but he would n't take off that tunic. At intervals he looked at his watch. At eight o'clock he said:—

"Time to go, boys, after you finish this pile."

They cheered hoarsely. The Hanover County farm boy was asleep again.

"Wake that kid up."

They pulled the farm boy to his feet. There was no water in the room. There was a film of cold coffee in the bottom of the pail. They threw that in his face and shook him until his teeth rattled.

"Time to milk them cows, sonny."

"We're goin' now." The bearded one pushed him. He stumbled out of the door. The men followed with the stretchers. Philip closed the door and followed them out. He went up Ninth Street with them to Capitol, where he turned off to his boarding house.

"Lawdy, Mr. Parramore, you sho' look a sight," Mrs. Meredith said. "Don't you want us to fix you some hot water to bathe before you eat your breakfast?"

"Have n't time. Another batch of quartermasters will be in on that train." That was n't the real reason, he knew. He wore his badge of service.

He finished his breakfast and went back to the office in Mechanics' Hall. A thick drizzle was falling. The Surgeon General's assistant was there when Philip got back. Clerks, such as he had been yesterday, were staggering under fresh bundles of supplies and dropping them in the offices. Yesterday he had been the least favored of the staff, so unimportant that he had been given the night duty. Now he was battle-scarred, and he watched the darlings of the department lug the crates into the room where he had worked with men from the field last night.

"Good job, Mr. Parramore," the major said. "The quartermaster officer told me you handled this end entirely yourself."

"That was very generous of the quartermaster officer. He had his hands full at the depot."

"A man with your knowledge of pharmacy can be of real value to this department. I'll see that you become a medical purveyor and that you're recommended for a commission. Think you can hold out to-day?"

"Oh, yes, sir, and thank you very much —"

"You deserve it. I hope the supplies hold out. I hate to buy any from these wholesalers here. God, this blockade is playing hell with us. Well, we'll keep it coming to you as long as we can get it — somehow. You keep it going out." He walked off.

Philip heard his steps in the hallway, then going downstairs. He sat down at one of the desks and lit a cigar. The clerks treated him to haughty glances as they panted with the bundles. Philip affected not to notice them. Wait until the commission came through.

There was a heavy tramping on the stairs, cursing voices. The new men from Manassas were arriving. Philip jumped up, threw the cigar out the window, moved behind the piles of supplies. Dusty, muddy, bloody, grimy quartermasters and stewards staggered into the room. They were a grimmer lot than those who had left. These had followed the battle closer. Smoke was blackened in their faces. Their haggard eyes were sunken. They had no greetings, no jokes.

"Bandages . . . linseed oil . . . lint . . . chalk ointment . . . plaster . . . camphor . . . cotton . . ."

"Men," Philip made his voice steady. He looked pretty trim beside these battle-stinking veterans. "If each of you will give me his personal order, one at a time, I'll fill them in small lots, and you sign for them —"

"The hell with that."

"Give us the damned stuff."

"I'm only following orders. You should have requisitions, but if you'll just sign —"

"Look here, handsome, we know you're a soljuh by yoh purty

uniform, so you don' have to make no show of yohself. But you ain't goin' to look so purty if you don' start passin' out them bundles — and goddam quick."

Philip heard the slow steps of the department darlings on the stairs. He did n't know where the quartermaster officer of these men was. It would be better to give in to these fellows than be humiliated in front of his enemy clerks.

"It's your responsibility," he said, with such dignity as he could muster, and threw out the first box he reached. He kept passing them out.

They said no more to him, little among themselves. They were n't friendly like the fellows last night. They were tenser, wearier, to start with, and Philip was glad he had n't crossed them. He still had his glory in front of the clerks.

The office slowly filled with men from other offices in Mechanics' Hall. They were clerks and officials from the War Office, from the Ordnance Department, from Adjutant General Cooper's office, all asking questions. Their talk droned on through the day. The drizzle thickened outside. Philip ached so that he could n't straighten. The pain in his back kept him humped over. His arms were numb. He was determined those men should not see him quit. Their words trickled through his brain with the soundlessness of a nightmare.

"If Evans had n't held 'em at that stone bridge on the left, we'd a been licked befoh we got started. . . . Beauregard did n't know what was happenin' theah. . . . He and Johnston kept their forces massed on the right, did you say? . . . Sure. Evans did n't have over a brigade till Bee and Bartow and Hampton come up. . . . Beauregard will be the hero, though. . . . And Johnston. . . . Yeh, Bartow got killed, and Bee too. On a hill by an old lady named Henry's house. . . . Yeh, that's wheah they was stopped. . . . Jackson's Vuhginia brigade come over from Harper's Ferry and held 'em theah. . . . We would a been goners right theah but foh them. Bee's men was runnin' like rabbits. . . . Yeh, Colonel Stuart come up theah with some cavalry and hit Heintzelman. The

Yanks was flankin' the hill toward Sudley Road. . . . Yeh. That's when Kirby Smith come up. Heintzelman was flankin' wider. . . . Kirby Smith and Marylanders and Tennesseans as well as Vuh-ginians. . . . You should a heard 'em yell. Damnedest thing you ever heard . . . made yoh blood run cold. . . . Then Jubal Early come a-runnin'. . . . Yeh. That's when the Yanks give way. . . . I don' know why they started runnin' thataway. . . . Beckham's battery was pourin' it into those men in front of Jackson and they started runnin' when they saw their flank gone. . . . Sure we got lots of supplies. . . . Yanks was throwin' away their guns and knapsacks and everything. . . . They could n't run fast because of the carriages blockin' the road. . . . Yeh, swells from Washin'ton wanted to see the show. . . . Heh-heh-heh. . . . One dandy we brung back had his bag with him. Know what he had in it? Dancin' slippuhs. Goin' to dance in Richmond. . . . Heh-heh-heh. . . . Found some handcuffs, too. . . . Reckon they wanted to handcuff Jeff Davis. . . . Plenty o' Yanks goin' see Richmond all right. . . . Heh-heh-heh. . . . I reckon we lose nigh two thousand, mostly wounded. . . . Naw, they can't shoot for sour apples. . . . 'Tain't one of 'em can hit a bull in the ass with a spade. . . . Heh-heh. . . ."

The sky was darkening. The day must be nearly over. Philip reached for a bundle of tourniquets and swayed. The room was whirling around him. A sick nausea washed up. The floor moved up and fell back. He grabbed at the desk. An arm like an oak limb went around his waist. He felt the chair under him. Voices sounded far away.

"Fellow's done in. . . . He's been here since yesterday. . . . Handsome ain't so bad. . . . Here, give him some brandy. . . ."

"Sorry about this, Mr. Parramore." It was the major's voice.

Philip tried to nod. His head was pushed back. The liquid burned his dry mouth. He choked, coughed. More burned his tongue, gagged, hit his stomach like a ball of fire. He gasped for breath. A glass of tepid water knocked against his teeth. It cooled his throat. Something soft and wet lay on his forehead.

"Close your eyes and take it easy. You'll be all right."

Philip did n't try to nod. He let his eyes stay closed. The room drifted away. He recognized a far-off voice as Mr. Kirby's brother, Virginius. He was a war clerk now. He was asking about the Howitzers. They had n't been in the battle. He was asking about the First Virginia Regiment. They had fought at Bull Run on the eighteenth. Yes, they had lost some men. Was Ambrose Kirby among them? No, did n't recognize the name. . . . Philip slept. . . .

Loud voices shook the room. Philip opened his eyes. It was night. Outside the rain poured in torrents. The quartermasters and stewards were gone. These men were strangers. There was the major among them and the Surgeon General himself. The others wore red and yellow and blue stripes on their collars and cuffs. They were soldiers. They had fought. They were all yelling.

"*Make* hospitals. . . . Use homes, churches . . . halls . . . factories. . . . There're hundreds of wounded in that train and more coming. . . . God damn it, what's this office for? . . . Got to have some order here. . . . Hell with your requisition forms — the wounded are at the depot now. They'll die while we're friggin' around like this. . . . Pursue them? Hell, no! Beauregard and Johnston went into a conference with Davis and now he's making a speech at the Spotswood. . . . For Christ's sake, two thousand men lost just to give him something to make a speech over. . . . Sure we could have been in Washington. . . . That Jackson wanted to go. . . . But we'll wait for them to start on Richmond again. . . . Come on. Supplies. . . ."

Philip closed his eyes. He was a casualty too, but these men would n't see it that way. The voices receded. The wounded had to be moved in this rain. . . . *I'll see that you're recommended for a commission. . . .*

CHAPTER VI

“And 400,000 men and \$400,000,000 to wage ‘a brief and decisive struggle’ is recognition that the United States admit the existence of a powerful nation opposed to them. Their acts show they regard us as enemy and not as friend. . . .”—*President Davis to the Fifth Confederate Congress, in Richmond, November 18, 1861*

John stood ready to leave. He wore Mr. Dinwiddie’s second-best overcoat and his throat was muffled in his sister Delphy’s gray shawl. It was cold in the Valley; Mr. Dinwiddie had written so. His black face bore with dignity the misery of the scratching shawl, for he was conscious of the importance of his errand.

He held tightly the big box which he had packed himself. He had charge of his master’s clothes and liquors. Miz Isobel had checked the contents: brandy, curaçao, Newton and Gordon Madeira, a pair of riding boots, two white shirts, woolen underwear, and woolen socks which Miz Isobel had knitted. It was too cold to change clothes. Like the privates, Mr. Dinwiddie wore them until he no longer could and threw them away.

John’s nephew Sam held the smaller box, which Mildred and her mother had packed. That contained a ten-pound roast turkey, an eight-pound ham, a package of plum pudding, and a jar of brandied peaches preserved by Edmonia, John’s mother. Sam was not muffled. He was going only to the depot.

Mrs. Wade took out a thousand dollars in new bills. Mildred saw that her mother hated to pass over the money. It was the exchange of their last gold. She had protested against buying the depreciating currency, but her husband had insisted they must

have faith in their country. The new bills were poorly engraved in black on cheap white paper.

"These were made by Ludwig and Hoyer, here in Richmond," her mother said. "I can't help it, but it does n't look like real money."

"No, ma'am." John shook his head. "Those bills made in New Orleans, with the two ladies on them, they were nice bills."

"Yes, but we have n't made any like those first ones from the bank note company in New York. Too bad they were called in."

"Yes'm. That looked like real money."

She kept looking at the freshly printed bills. "It does n't say 'payable in twelve months' any more, but 'at the peace.' Well, may that be soon."

"Amen, Miz Isobel."

She reluctantly released the money. "Now, John, use it sparingly, but spend anything you have to reach Mr. Dinwiddie at Winchester."

"Yes'm. I reckon I'll have a lot left for Mr. Dinwiddie."

He put the money in his inside pocket. Sam gulped as it disappeared. Sam was eighteen. He was not, as John said, a good nigger. John could n't understand his nephew. He would n't learn to garden or to groom; he just was n't no account somehow. John looked at him.

"Come along, Sam. Good-bye, Miz Isobel. Good-bye, Miss Mildred."

"Be sure and learn all you can about Mr. Dinwiddie's company."

They watched the two negroes pass through the front door. Bitter wind blasted into the hall. The low-burning fire flared. Mildred did n't like the way her mother stood looking at the mantel. Sprigs of holly lay between the pewter goblets, and wreaths with bright red berries encircled the pewter plates.

"I'd like to throw it all in the fire." Her mother's voice was drawn as tight as a bow. "I'd like to throw out everything that suggests Christmas. What kind of Christmas is it going to be for us?"

"Much better than for Father and all the other soldiers who won't be home." Mildred forced herself to speak quietly.

"Well, what kind of Christmas will it be for anyone in Virginia? What kind of life? We watched your father and our friends march off so gayly, with their bands playing, and we all thought they'd fight a battle and we would be in the Confederacy. Now he's up there freezing in a mountain camp and all you hear is of the United States drilling half a million men and spending millions of dollars to invade us. And their papers are full of hatred for us. Why do they want us in the same country if they hate us so much?"

"St. George said that Yankees don't fight for fun, but for profit." Mildred talked in an even monotone.

"Yes, and I remember what your father said, too. They got the profits of selling us slaves and we got the opprobrium of owning them. I wish they had the slaves, and they could keep the profits too. If I had dreamed this war was possible, I would never have let your father buy that Josiah and Maggie. We've had nothing but trouble from them since your father's been away."

"Oh, Mother, we had to have a groom when Delphy's husband died, and Edmonia never did get along with the cook."

"That's the trouble. Edmonia will never get along with any negro who was n't born in the Wade family, and, more particularly, her own. Now Josiah and Maggie have won over Delphy's foolish children and the house is a silent warfare with Edmonia, Delphy, and John against Josiah, Maggie, and Sam and Felissy. I tell you, I'd be happier if we could sell the lot of them. But who's buying slaves now? Josiah and Maggie cost your father two thousand dollars and Sam and Felissy I don't know what. We raised them since they were helpless and they're not much more than that now. People advertising twenty-five dollars reward for runaway slaves! I wish ours would run away. I would n't pay twenty-five cents for the lot of them."

It was pointless to talk any more with her mother. She had been diverted from the subject which would have led her to hysteria. Now Mildred had to escape to save herself. Her mother drove her

hard these days. She was different from the hurt young girl who had kissed her beau good-bye six months before. Life evolved around her now, without an accustomed pattern, and without Dinny. Her own nervous tension had supplanted the pattern. As an object for its release, Mildred had supplanted her father. But to-day her own nerves lay too close to the surface.

"Well, Mother," she said, "I'll be taking that package to the hospital."

"Good heavens, Mildred, can't you remain quiet for one day? It's fine to prepare food for the soldiers . . . even though we have little enough for ourselves . . . but you go out every day delivering it and every night to parties and balls."

"I have to be busy to keep my mind off myself." Then she added quickly, "Besides, that's little enough to do for those soldiers away from home."

"But such men! It's bad enough the soldiers our friends entertain in their homes, but you don't know who you are meeting at these military benefit balls in the Old Market and such places. It's well your father warned you about that Kirby man before he left or you might be associating with no one knows who, like the other girls. I can't imagine what their mothers are thinking of. Apparently any man wearing a uniform is eligible for your daughter these days."

"That's about right, Mother."

"It may be right for them, but not for you. There're plenty of nice soldiers for you to cheer. By the way, whatever became of that handsome colonel from Texas?"

"You mean General Wigfall?"

"Oh no. He's not handsome. The tall man who had been a lieutenant in the old Second Cavalry, with General Lee and Fitz Lee and Albert Sidney Johnston and that Virginian, Thomas, who stayed with the United States."

"Oh, Colonel Hood."

"That's the one. He was the most charming man. I wonder where he is."

"I don't know, Mother. I must get this package to the hospital before dinner. They're expecting me."

"Well, after that, will you promise not to do anything else to-day? You must n't look run-down for Dennis and you should rest before the dinner this evening."

"I'd like to rest instead of going to that dinner. I hate to be in the same room with Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Joe Johnston."

"Is n't it a shame the way those ladies go at one another? I declare, you would think we might have peace among ourselves, but they say now that Davis and Joe Johnston are just as bad enemies as Davis and Beauregard. It does seem the President can't get along with anyone. Both Mr. Hunter and Mr. Walker have left the Cabinet since Mr. Toombs left and I don't care for that Jew Benjamin as Secretary of War. He looks like a wealthy grocer. He's too oily for me."

"Maybe that's why the President likes him."

"Oh dear, can it be that all the criticism of Davis's despotism is true? He was so popular at first. Now the way the *Examiner* goes after him is shameful. I don't know what to think myself."

"Well, I know he seems so burdened by the troubles of the world that his receptions are deadly."

"They are, Mildred, they are, but we just have to go to this dinner to-night, so won't you please rest this afternoon and look nice for Dennis to-morrow?"

"I will, Mother, I promise," she said hastily. "I'll lie down when I come back. You better get some rest yourself."

"I must get off those socks I promised the Aid Society. I think we've knitted enough socks for both armies. I suppose the poor men will use them for gloves and drawers and everything else."

"I won't be gone long." Mildred turned away before her mother could start on something else and hurried into the butler's pantry.

The box which Edmonia had wrapped in newspaper stood alone on the bare shelf. The closed cupboard doors looked as if they were never opened, as if behind them the shelves were empty. It looked like a room in a deserted house and the newspaper-wrapped

bundle something the departed occupants had discarded. Even the smell was musty.

Memories of other Christmases stretched back through all her living days. Nothing was warmer in her memory than the aroma and the promising confusion of this room. The long shelf had been cluttered with steaming dishes, with platters of fowl to be carved, with plates of pies, mounds of cakes and pastry, trays of plum tarts and cookies, and John had hovered over the cut-glass punch bowl with an array of bottles from his master's cellar stock around him. Mildred picked up the package, wrapped in newspaper because wrapping paper was too high and scarce. She walked quietly out of the musty, deserted room.

In the empty hallway she stood before the fire and pulled on her cloak. She remembered last year, standing before this fire and pulling on her cloak, but her bundle was light and wrapped in crinkly red paper. And she remembered packages borne into this hallway by laughing guests. Their cheeks had been pink from the cold and their voices loud. *Merry Christmas. . .*

She hurried through the front door. The sky hung gray and low. The cold was wet. A raw wind rustled the bare branches of the trees. In the distance a drum rattled.

As she walked along Franklin Street, the only strollers she saw were wounded soldiers. Strangers on the street hurried. Friends were in their homes, sewing for soldiers, nursing, boarding refugees, and government officials, boarding the strangers with sharp eyes and cold features — the gamblers and speculators and buyers, those mysterious men of a race apart who might be spies, who might be abolitionists inciting the slaves, who might be the deft-fingered users of the garrote on night streets. Thank God, they were not forced to take in boarders yet.

She could n't understand why the warehouse suffered so greatly. She knew that with her father and his foremen and best clerks in the army, the business was run poorly and, they suspected, dishonestly. She knew the blockade hurt their foreign sale. But it seemed that the warehouse should pay something. Yet her father wrote that it

barely paid its way and he only kept it open in the hope of European recognition, which would offer him a market for accumulated tobacco.

At the corner, Mildred impulsively turned down Seventh Street. It had been years since she had seen the warehouse. A nostalgia for the mood of those past years dimmed the present as she crossed Main Street and saw the familiar stores of wholesalers down toward Cary Street. Smells and sounds evoked the mood of the girl she had been when last she walked the rough brick sidewalk and heard heavy wagons rumble over cobblestones.

Across the muddy canal loomed the high stone walls of the public tobacco warehouse. She walked along the canal to the Basin. At the far end of its still water she saw the red brick buildings, and above the top windows were painted the faded letters, WADE TOBACCO WAREHOUSE.

Her father had brought her here when she was a little girl and he used to point out the ships with foreign flags. Then he would walk her through the strange and fascinating maze of busy streets. She remembered the dusty walls of the Gallego Flour Mills and the noise of Talbott's Foundry and the bleak barnlike building of Libby and Sons, ship chandlers. Everywhere men spoke to him and many touched their hats. He had loved people around him, loved to have them gay and laughing. He used to lavish such attention on the details of living. Chester Cary's father once, in his cups, had told him in his courtroom manner: "Dinwiddie, at achieving eminence in the nonessentials of life, you have no equal among my acquaintances." Now John was taking him a box of food and woolen socks and riding boots to walk in. . . .

Moisture stung her eyes. She slowly climbed back up the hill to Main Street. In front of the Spotswood Hotel a crowd of men were milling. In the centre store there her father had drilled with Company F. Now those Richmond men were away in the armies and the streets belonged to these strangers who came from nowhere. Only the stores were familiar, the links between their old lives and this bleak day.

There was Smith, the news dealer, of whom her father used to buy his *Southern Literary Messenger*, and West's bookstore, where her mother used to buy *Godey's* and where last spring she had bought Hardee's *Tactics*. Taylor's Music Store looked in need of paint; no one had pianos tuned now. Lewis Ginter's window was bare of the fancy clocks and urns and workboxes that used to delight her. They had bought their fenders and fire tongs there. Her father used to buy his wines at Stegal's, those last bottles which John was taking to him, and sometimes he had bought clothes at Merchant and Weiseger's. Across the street from the banks, Duquesne, the Paris hairdresser, looked deserted. Did anyone patronize him now? The windows of Kent, Paine, the drygoods wholesalers, had only gray cloth and calico. She paused for a longer look. Some of the designs were certainly pretty. She turned away. Mitchell and Taylor's had nothing but uniforms in their windows.

Mildred walked faster. The box grew heavier and both her arms were cramped. Near the St. Charles Hotel more soldiers moved on the street, slowly, some limping, some with bandaged heads, some with arms held stiff in slings. All were as gray as the capes pulled close around their necks. Last year her father used to go to the barbershop in the hotel. Now pale men in gray sat on the narrow balcony around the second floor and wounded soldiers huddled under the canopy. In the doorway the smell of antiseptics and medicine sickened her as it always did. Upstairs, order never came to the jumbled lines of cots. Nurses hurried, everyone talked, and always someone groaned, low.

She waited for the matron to direct her to the soldiers she would feed. The room was chilly and the air thick. She would never grow accustomed to it. She saw the matron beside a bed. She was talking to another soldier standing at the head, and she was laughing. Mildred had never seen her laugh before. The soldier in the overcoat straightened and she saw his head, with dark brown hair growing thick and long on the back of his neck. Her body tensed and her heart beat hard and fast. Her pulse raced and all at once she felt weak. Then she grew panic-stricken. She knew only a

blind desire to escape. She thrust out the package to a passing nurse.

"Here's the Christmas food I promised. I'm sorry I can't stay to-day."

The nurse gave her a curious glance. "You look a little peaked yourself. You'd better get into the air. We've got lots of help to-day, anyway. Soldiers on furloughs are visiting their friends."

"Yes. Yes." She backed toward the door. The matron moved away from the bed. Brose Kirby was shaking hands with the man lying there.

She ran down the hall to the stairs. At the bottom she stopped to get her breath. Her heart felt as though it would jump from her body. After six months of trying to forget him, he could still do this to her. She had not forgotten him, that she knew. But she had forgotten the emotion. She heard slow steps on the stairs. She began to tremble. She was afraid it was he, and she should hurry out. She knew it was he, and she could not move. Then she heard his voice, low and quiet.

"Howdo, Miss Wade."

She looked at him. It was the face that she had remembered, all these months, only his eyes looked even blacker under the cap brim. She remembered his old kepi.

"How are you?" That steady voice was not her own.

"It's bad upstairs." His face was closed. "I was visiting my sergeant."

"Is he badly hurt?"

"He's dying."

It was a moment before she could answer. "I'm sorry."

"He does n't know it. But I've got to get out of here. Would you allow me to walk with you up the street?"

"I'd be glad if you would."

He walked beside her out of the hospitalized hotel. The sky was closer and the air damper.

"Was your sergeant wounded in a battle?"

"Just a skirmish. That's all we do since Manassas — skirmish

and build entrenchments. It looks like all we're doing is to wait for the Yankees to build a great big army so they can invade us again, this time all over the South."

"Where are you camped?"

"At Centerville—the coldest spot in Virginia. We've chimneys made out of flour barrels stuck up through our tents."

His voice struck in her the same vibrations of last spring. She grew suddenly aware of the absence in her life of any quickening like it. She wanted him to go on talking.

"Shall you be able to stand the winter like that?"

"It's not so bad. Old Fred—that's Colonel Skinner—has his mind on fox-hunting, and Major Dooley really runs the regiment. He knows less than I do, but he's a good soul. He believes we should be as comfortable as we can and looks the other way when we bring in applejack."

She glanced at his shoulders that swayed the cape of his gray overcoat.

"You've all become soldiers since I saw you last at the Fair Grounds camp."

He looked quickly at her. "I didn't think you'd want to remember the last time you saw me."

"You said I would." She spoke softly, looking down at the street.

"Yes . . ." They walked a moment in silence. "You've changed yourself since I saw you."

"How?" She recalled her mother's warning that she was running herself down.

"Your skin is whiter and it makes your eyes look even smokier. You have the whitest skin I ever saw. I've remembered that."

"I've been working hard at the hospital, that's why I'm pale." Her breath came too fast.

"Not pale," he said slowly. He was staring straight ahead. "After Bull Run, we didn't fight at Manassas. We just stood there with bullets flying around us and watched our men drop. The smoke rolled into the morning mist and it was a bluish-gray

fog. That reminded me of your eyes. I remembered how dark they looked against your white face. Now your face is whiter than it was when I saw it at Manassas."

"Is that what soldiers think of in battles?" she asked, very low.

"I don't know." The drawl left his voice abruptly. "I've never been in anything but skirmishes, except Bull Run. All I thought of then was that I wished I had spent more time shooting guns than billiards."

"You said that now you were a soldier you did n't think."

"When did I say that?"

"The afternoon you were in my house."

"And you remembered?" He turned to her. She nodded, meeting his black eyes. "I said you would remember that day you came to camp. I don't know why except that I did n't believe I could think of you so much unless you thought of me."

"Yes, I thought of you, Brose," she said simply. "Now that I've told you, there's nothing more to be said — or done."

"Because your father does n't want me in the house?" He spoke in a level, quiet tone, but she sensed the intensity there.

"Because it just would n't do — you must see that."

"No, I don't see that. You said you've thought of me as I have of you. Then, there's no reason we should n't see each other — except that your father, and probably your mother too, does n't want you to. But that has nothing to do with us."

"Of course it has."

"In peace time maybe, if I was your father's shipping clerk. But not now. Things are different. Our country's not our own, our city might not be our own, even our lives. We're living from day to day. The war brought us together. It made you remember me."

"We just can't see each other; that's all."

"We can't be together at your house, that's all we can't do. We can meet outside."

"Do you think I'm crazy?"

"If you were n't, you'd never have remembered me."

"That might be true, but I don't have to go completely mad. . . . This is my corner."

"To-morrow night?"

"Will you say good-bye? I don't want to walk off from you again."

"To-morrow night's my only chance. To-night I must stay with my family. After to-morrow night is Christmas Eve. The day after Christmas my furlough's up."

She took one long look at his dark face. "Good-bye," she said.

"In front of Centenary Methodist Church. You're invited to the Broughtons' party across the street. You can have your coachman leave —"

"How did you know that?"

"As soon as he's gone, you can cross to the church. It's in a shadow. I'll be there at nine o'clock."

"Oh, you know I can't meet you out like a — like a —"

"I'll be waiting."

She turned and hurried up Sixth Street.

Dennis came straight to her as soon as his company was dismissed. She had not left her carriage. The ground was wet from last night's snow flurry and the air was raw. Josiah had the carriage backed to the wind and Mildred huddled in her fur collar with a muff in front of her face. Over it she watched Dennis, hurriedly nodding to civilians who were at the new camp.

She had forgotten how big he was. His face looked healthier than ever, instinct with his driving strength. It was that power he emanated which made him look so massive, she thought. Among the scattered groups on the improvised camping ground around the reservoir, he was like a gunboat ploughing through small ships. Muddy boots flapped the bottom of his overcoat. It was splashed with fresh mud and coated with dried mud, patched and torn. Then he smiled and showed the even teeth that belonged with his ice-blue eyes. Dennis reached for both her hands and put one foot on the step. The carriage rocked.

"I'm so sorry to have kept you waiting," he said. "I thought they'd march us here from the depot and dismiss us. I did n't know

the armory band would escort us and we'd have to arrange camp right away. You must be frozen."

"You must be frozen yourself. Hop in."

Still smiling, with his eyes bright and clear, he climbed into the carriage, talking all the while.

"No, I'm not cold a bit. I feel fine except for these rags. Could your coachman take me to the Exchange? I think I have a room there. We have some new dress uniforms the city donated to the company for our parade to-morrow, but I want to use mine right away . . . maybe to-night. . . ."

"Certainly," she said quickly. "Josiah! The Exchange." When she looked at Dennis again she wore a pleasant smile. She hoped it did not show the strain she felt. "I must say, you look fine. I expected you'd be thin and wan after all I've heard about the hardships in western Virginia."

"*West* Virginia." The smile left his face. "That's another state now, and good that it is. Those hill people are no more Virginians than Yankees are. And what a cheap Yankee trick! They allowed those counties to secede from Virginia, in spite of our constitution against it, but we can't secede from other states. It all depends on who profits from the secession, I suppose. Well, Lord knows, they're welcome to the place."

"Have things gone so badly out there for us?"

"Could n't have been worse. General Lee was a great disappointment. All I hope is that he does better with the Carolina coast defenses than he did with us. We need some defenses down there, the way we're losing forts to the United States fleet. By the way, the Forty-sixth might go down there. That'd give General Wise a chance to show his critics. He's a good brigadier and we're anxious to show that the *West* Virginia mess was not his fault. The War Department does n't believe anybody but a West Pointer can be a good general. I know you won't mention our plans to anyone. They're only tentative."

"Naturally not." She wanted to keep him on general subjects. "We hear so much about spies."

He nodded. Then his smile returned and his eyes brightened again. "But I want to talk about you. What have you been doing?"

"Oh, waiting to hear news from the front." She forced a smile.

"Not at Christmas time. Lord, it's great to be back. There're the old Fair Grounds. I used to run my hunters there in flat races when I was a kid. . . . You know, I've got to sell my hunters while I'm here. They'll make good cavalry mounts, I reckon. I would've sold them before but I had several entered in the Fairfield spring meeting. That was optimistic, was n't it? But I actually believed last spring the war would be over in time for the fall Broad Road meeting. Now it looks like many falls before it'll be over."

"That's what Father thinks too."

"It's a shame he could n't get home. That's what he gets for letting Company F go in the Twenty-first. Now that they're with that man Jackson, they'll do some marching. When we passed through Winchester it was snowing and I saw a man standing by himself, looking us over. He had on a blue overcoat with a large cape and the coat came down almost to the bottom of his boots. A faded cap came down over his eyes and what with a big beard you could hardly see anything of his face. Someone said, 'That's Stonewall Jackson.' He looked like a hard soldier. . . . But let's forget the war now. We've got this time together. You know how anxious I am to see you, Mildred. How about to-night?"

"That would be fine, Dennis." Brose would wait in the church shadows.

"I can't tell you how I've looked forward to it. But you must know. Mildred." His voice grew thick. "You know that I love you . . . don't you?"

"Dennis, if you don't mind, let's not talk . . . of that . . . now." What would it have been like, there in the shadows with that man whose life was different from anything she had ever known?

"I reckon this is not the time." He chuckled heavily. "But that's all that's been on my mind and it just came out. You know,

I wanted to tell you before I left, but I thought I'd wait until we were free, and I did n't think the war part of secession would last long."

"None of us did. I remember three days before Manassas, Company F paraded through Richmond and everybody cheered them. We knew then there would be a big battle and a lot of us thought we would be free after that. Mother and I were particularly happy, too, to have a chance to cheer Father with his company. You know, the first time his company left, he did n't go with them. He left later, by himself, and it was sad for us all."

"Yes, I know," Dennis said heavily. "Your father told me about his going away."

"Told you what?"

His big jaw tightened. "About that fellow we had the trouble with on Secession Night. Mildred. Has he anything to do with why you don't want me to talk of — of love?"

Her eyes looked into the long fur of the muff. "Dennis," she spoke into the fur, "I don't love you."

"But you seemed to before that night. Maybe if I had told you —"

"No, I'm glad you did n't. I liked you, Dennis. I like you now . . ."

"But then it seemed more."

"I tried to make it more, but I could n't."

"But . . . but, why not?"

"I just could n't!" Her voice rose. "Don't you understand, you can't make love come if it won't."

Then she looked at him and, when she saw his face, Mildred realized that she had lost control of herself. She felt herself quivering. Since yesterday, when she had seen Brose Kirby, the old, blind urgency had driven her.

"I'm sorry," Dennis muttered.

"No, I'm the one to be sorry. You have n't done anything."

"Don't say that. I should n't have said anything at a time like this. I'm just a blundering fool, I reckon."

"No, Dennis, this war is making fools of us all."

"That does n't excuse me," he said in a low voice. "I hope, though, you will still see me to-night?"

"Ye-es . . . Dennis . . ." She hardly heard her own words.

Snow had fallen since dusk. Unlike last night's, it was dry and very white. When Mildred left her house, the lawn and street were covered with a thin layer, like icing. The air was warmer, and soft. The carriage turned into Grace Street and the city life seemed as muffled as the slow rhythm of the horses in the snow. To-night there were no rolling drums, no marching feet, no sullen rumble of caissons and guns, no death-march tread. Richmond looked beautiful again, exciting and full of promise. But never, not even in her most golden days, had she known this expectancy. For she was moving through the night snow to her first rendezvous.

"Josiah," she called, "don't turn in the Broughton driveway. It's too narrow for a slippery night like this. Just stop at the gates."

"Yes'm." His head went back down like a turtle's in the scarf around his chin. The carriage moved under the trees, slowed, crept, then eased to a stop in front of the iron gates. The lamps outside the doorway illumined the semicircular stone steps and reflected down the drive to the shadows of the gates. From inside floated a low chorus of men's and women's voices in the favorite song of furlough:—

"The years creep slowly by, Lorena,
The snow is on the grass again;
The sun's low down the sky, Lorena,
The frost gleams where the flowers have been . . ."

Mildred stepped from the carriage.

"You may go now, Josiah," she said, as calmly as she could. "Good night."

"Good night, Miss Mildred." His voice was thickened by his scarf. He clucked to the horses and the carriage started to turn around.

Mildred slowly crossed the sidewalk into the shadowed gateway. She pulled her muff over her face and watched Josiah complete the turn. He was looking at the horses. The carriage moved slowly down Grace Street.

"A hundred months have passed, Lorena,
Since last I held that hand in mine,
And felt the pulse beat fast, Lorena,
Though mine beat faster far than thine . . ."

She became aware of her own pulses beating fast as the voices of her friends drifted over her. Suddenly she wished she was in there, with them, as her mother believed her to be. She glanced across the street. A shadow moved in the darkness. Now that the moment was here, she could not imagine herself crossing that street.

She heard the muffled beat of other horses. They might be coming here. She drew in a deep breath and bent her head. Then she was out in the street, walking fast. She stepped up on the sidewalk. The shadow against the church moved toward her. The hoof beats sounded clearer. She passed into the deep shadow and saw buttons gleaming on the overcoat cape. He took dim form. The cape flapped back. His hands reached hers.

It was the first time he had ever touched her. He stood still, as if listening to the beats of her heart. Across the street a carriage turned into the drive.

"I was crazy to come." Her voice was no more than a whisper.

"Yes, but the night was right. If it had rained, you would n't."

"I don't know what to say now. You see, this is my first rendezvous." She gave a little laugh.

"Well," he said slowly, "we might take a walk."

"All right." She moved close beside him onto the sidewalk. "Did you think I was coming?"

"I did n't know."

"Then you're not always so sure of yourself as you sound."

He looked at her and grinned. "I was sure that I'd wait somewhere until you did come."

"I was sure I would n't, until two hours ago."

"What changed your mind?"

"At dusk, when it started snowing, the city was so lovely I felt that I had to enjoy it. I felt that I was robbing myself not to come here. But, now that I'm here, I don't know why I am."

"I don't know either."

"You ought to. You must have known many girls."

When he turned quickly toward her, she could not meet his eyes.

"I've never known one like you," he said.

"I don't think you know me, Brose. I've never done anything like this. And the things I had to do to come . . . I lied to my mother, and to a man. I wrote him a note, breaking an engagement, and it's his first day home on his Christmas furlough. I know I ought n't to be here."

"Who was the man?" His voice was a tone lower.

"His name is Dennis Leatherbury . . . Lieutenant Leatherbury now."

"That horse with you and your father Secession Night?"

She nodded, suddenly overwhelmed with shame. Here on the street with him, she could not defend Dennis. And that allied her with him not only against Dennis, but against her father, and her whole world.

"The lieutenant probably has a thick hide," Brose said.

"He loves me!"

"You don't love him. A clumsy ox like him could n't have anything for you."

Mildred lowered her head. She said gently, "Don't you know you should n't say things like that about people?"

"Don't you know I don't believe in doing or saying what you should?"

"I should know it. You've made me do things I should n't." She glimpsed the soft lights in the brick houses of her friends along Third Street. Above her the snow-lined limbs of trees formed patterns against the night sky.

"Don't you know that you've made me do things too?" he said, suddenly.

"What could I make you do that you've never done before?"

"Don't you know?"

"Yes," she said softly.

He said nothing and Mildred was very grateful for that. She glanced at his profile. He was not good-looking. But his reckless mouth . . . since that first night she had remembered it, and she wondered how his lips would feel against hers. Ahead rose the deep shadows of the park around Gamble's Hill. They walked around the edge and the snow on the path was untouched. Looking down at the untrodden surface of the hill below was like walking on the brim of a secret world. They reached the rock pile with which Captain John Smith had marked the head of his navigation of the James.

"I feel," he said, "like we're here all alone in a strange world, as he was."

"I wish we were."

He faced her. His quickness would have startled her had he not moved so easily. The cape flapped back and his arms reached out around her. She was not surprised. It seemed natural, inevitable, that her body yielded. One hand slipped out of the muff and crept around his neck. She felt its round firmness. Then she knew what his mouth was like on hers. She knew it with her whole body.

"No . . ." she whispered. "No."

He held her, his face close over hers. His hot black eyes glowed in the darkness.

"This is all wrong," she said. "I don't know what it is, but, please let me go."

His head lifted and he released her slowly. His hands left her body lingeringly. Her own hand slid along his cape and she leaned there a moment, she was so weak.

"I'm not flirting," she said. "You know that. I'm just—scared."

"Sure. I'm a little scared myself."

"You?" Her arm moved away and she drew back to look at him.

"Even me." His words sounded bitter.

"I mean, Brose, why should you be frightened, when you can come into my life and go?"

"You think I can go?"

At the dark intensity of his face, her fright grew. "You've got to," she cried.

He said nothing. He did n't move. She could look at him no longer. Turning, she saw the valley stretched out below in dim, broken whiteness. The river and the ribbon of canal shone dully against the banks, and Belle Isle was a misty mound. Sparks flew into the white mist from the chimneys of the Tredegar Iron Works. Now they manufactured shells there, cannon balls, and guns, the heavy guns that rumbled through the streets. Other guns like those were moving across the Virginia countryside to blast their shells at this man standing beside her.

"It's the war," she said, her voice almost pleading. "Don't you understand? The war has done this to us. It's made us all crazy. But the war won't go on forever. We'll go back and live as we did before. And then . . ."

"And then, you mean, my life and yours would n't fit."

"Would they?"

"I don't suppose your family would welcome me as a son-in-law, but —"

"Not for that reason, Brose. I don't care even about my family at this moment. But I would later and so would you."

"We have not got later. We've got only now."

"Oh no. We've got our whole lives, and we really don't know each other, except that we're nothing on earth alike. You're what you are and I—I'm what I am. What kind of life would two such strangers have?"

"How do we know what kind of life any of us will ever have again? To-night we're a country, the Confederacy, and we're

fighting for our existence. That's all we've got — this war. This is our life, now, not what we have been or ever might become."

"Don't you see it's because you say that that there can't be anything between us? You live only for to-day, you always have."

"But that's what you like about me."

"That's what makes me do wild things, like coming out here to-night. But I can't live on such feelings. I've got to think of my life after this war stops. Then I'll go on living as I did before, and so will you, so will all of us."

"None of us will ever live again as we did before the war." All the undercurrent of passion in his voice throbbed through his words.

"Why do you say that?"

"I know it. I've talked to Yankee pickets and Yankee prisoners. The United States is out to ruin us and they won't stop until they have. Not the soldiers, but those behind them. The ones in power are out to get us under their heels and grow rich off of us. They're crazy about money up there. Did you know we're still buying arms from Northern manufacturers?"

"No."

"Well, we are. Their agents sell through Nashville — for gold. Do you think people who're so greedy they'd sell guns to kill their own kind will spare us until they get back every dollar they've spent? Every soldier knows that we're in a fight to the death. We've got to beat the United States to win our freedom or be beaten and trampled on. Whichever happens, it'll be a long time, and you and I will never be the same again."

"We can't be beaten! And when we've won our freedom, Virginia will be like it was before, only better, and our lives will go on as they did before."

"Virginia will never be like it was before and our lives can never be the same. Can you forget?"

"I won't believe you. I won't!"

"You don't believe me now, but next year this time you'll believe somebody else."

"Don't say that. Please don't talk that way."

"It's no use talking any way."

She was silent. She felt sick with the turmoil inside her. She tried to weave a clear thought from the tangle, but she only grew more confused.

"I'm sorry, Brose. I'm sorry for everybody. I do everything wrong. I don't know what's the matter with me."

"Don't be sorry for me," he said. "Shall I take you back?"

"If you will," she replied in a low voice.

Walking back silently along the edge of the hill, she saw their tracks in the snow. She remembered her exultant mood when they had walked through the fresh snow. Whatever ecstasy she had seemed on the verge of capturing then was lost now, lost in this white night where it would never return.

He's no man for one of your thrills, Mildred. . . . You don't know anything about such people. . . . I'd resign my command if I thought you'd ever see him again. . . . He's a black 'un. . . . Her father had understood, too well. But how was she to know? It was too late now, too late for everything except regrets.

"You won't see me again during my furlough, I reckon." He spoke calmly enough.

"No. You won't try, will you?"

"No."

"I hope you — will try to understand me. You won't be angry with me?"

"Oh no." His voice had a cutting edge. "I'm going to take away a sweet memory. I'm going to cherish it in my dreams like a gallant Virginia gentleman. I'm going to see your face in the campfire and I'll sing 'Lorena.'"

She was silent a moment. Then she said, steadily: "You're very hard, aren't you? It's in your very fibre. And I'm afraid of you, that's why I can't see you again. I'm afraid."

"You want something that you haven't got, that you've never had. I saw that in you right away. Well, you'll never get anything by being afraid. . . . I'll take you back to the party now."

CHAPTER VII

1ST CO. RICHMOND HOWITZERS
GOOSE CREEK CAMP, LOUDON COUNTY, VA.
Christmas Eve, 1861

DEAREST MOTHER:—

Your wonderful box came and it was most welcome. Though we have plentiful game around here and we had killed and cleaned enough rabbits and ducks and partridges for a feast there is nothing like a fine old Virginia ham for Christmas, and there is nobody who can prepare one like you. I have divided it with the whole mess and Lace got a box of plum tarts and cookies which he divided and Tommy got two bottles of Madeira wine. Also the negro cider cart came around to-day and we bought some apple cider for our banquet to-morrow.

We have gathered lots of oak and pine and hickory for our big centre fire and since I wrote you last some men in the battery have built benches around it. It is not very cold yet and we are still cozy in our log huts. The tent fly in front makes us feel very private. As to-morrow is the first day that we are to be let off our battery drill and the manual of the piece, we are going to "The Ball" to-night at Fiddler's Green. That is a shanty run by a woman and three fiddling daughters. They sell groceries and moonshine, but they are too dear for us, but we have all saved our last pay for the celebration to-night. If Granny would pop in now and say "Christmas gift" it would almost be like home.

As to what I need, I could do best of all with a new jacket if you can spare the money. There is some new gray cloth at the Qr.Mstr.'s which would be fine. It need n't be double-breasted nor have those padded shoulders, as most of the men are now using short, single-breasted jackets. If you have a spare blanket you could lend me, I will mail it home in the spring. Foolishly, like everyone else, I threw

away my extra one when it was so hot marching last summer. Now I have learned my lesson. Besides that, what I need most of all is some writing paper and envelopes and stamps. This is my last half-sheet.

We hear nothing of the Yanks themselves but we hear horrendous tales of how they are preparing to annihilate us as soon as the weather breaks. Poor us, I hope we're annihilated again like we were at Manassas. Meanwhile we play poker with grains of corn and still go into Leesburg, which is very attractive. I forgot to mention that I could do with any kind of books, as we are not busy here much of the time, and some days are as dull as Papa's penknife.

I hope you all had a merry Christmas and it was fine that Brose could get home. Love to you all.

Aff't'ly,

Your son,

PAUL KIRBY

The sitting room had the after-Christmas air of forlorn uselessness. The holly wreaths hanging from the shades and the sprigs of fir and clusters of berries waited for an occasion that had passed. The older women seemed to be waiting too. Elizabeth watched Granny, patiently rocking and staring out of the window as if she expected to see Brose come swinging along the street. Her mother was reading Paul's letter again. She had said she was trying to picture Paul and his companions at their feast.

Elizabeth put Chester's letter back in the envelope of brown Confederate paper. If only she could talk as openly of Chester as they did of Brose and Paul. If only she could tell them of her fear at reading of his narrow escape in the Dranesville fight. It was the fear that girls felt for their sweethearts. She could n't have been more stricken if they had been engaged. But she knew what her family would say. She had heard them often enough. *He's in society. . . . He's had Governors and Senators in his family. . . . A girl ought to be satisfied with her own station in life. . . . Little boats must stay close to shore. . . .*

What hurt was that she knew they were right. She had no

right to think of Chester as she did, even if his letters were so sweet. It was just the excitement of the war that had thrown them together. She could see by his letters that the war had caught him up; he was nothing else but the war. His letters were filled with details of Stuart's cavalry brigade: how they got forage, how many miles they covered, how many horses had broken down, where they had picketed, and with whom they had skirmished.

She was part of the war to him because he had known her during that first exciting week, because of his affection for Brose and Paul, and because all their lives had been reduced to nothing but war. But when war was over, all this would be gone, and they would return to their natural lives.

"Elizabeth," her mother said sharply, "why do you keep reading that letter of Chester's?"

"Oh! . . . They were in a terrible fight at Dranesville and . . . ah . . ."

"Was Chester hurt?"

"No, but —" Elizabeth saw by her mother's expression what she was thinking, so she hurried on. "They all were nearly slaughtered. They were taking wagons there for forage, with a guard, and they ran into a big ambush, and had to fight their way out against overwhelming numbers, that's what Chester said."

"Forage and supplies. If this commissary department was any good, our boys would n't have to go chasing into enemy territory for their food. Paul writes about plenty of rabbits and partridges they killed, but he does n't say anything about the food they get. Salt beef and coarse bread, that's all. Brose says they were going to have sorghum molasses for Christmas. I should n't think those soldiers would have to risk their lives just to get provisions."

"Chester says they'd been given information that the supplies were at Dranesville and no enemy around. He thinks a spy betrayed them, as the Yankees were waiting there in the woods beside the road. They would n't have been in a place like that, Chester said, unless they had known his cavalry was coming."

"Yes, that's something else we have to contend with. Your Uncle Virginus says that any soldier or Confederate has to sell his soul to get a passport from General Winder's provost guards, but men carrying mail back and forth, and these speculators, can come and go as they please."

"Chester says they should run everyone out of the state whose business is n't right here."

"And they should run a lot out whose business is here, like that Milton Duke. Making himself rich off our hardships. Your father says if Duke raises his prices again, he might as well close his store. I wish he would close it, but he's miserable now when he has to close it to come home to dinner."

"He could get a clerical position in one of the war departments, like Uncle Virginus wants him to."

"Oh, no," her mother said bitterly, "he would n't do that. He gets those positions for other people, like that Parramore clerk of his. He in his fancy uniform while your father goes worrying himself sick!"

"Honest loss is better than shameful gain," Granny said placidly.

"Our loss is to the army! There're lots of them like that Parramore. They ought to be made to fight."

"Now, Judy, don't take on that way so much."

"Oh, Mamma, nobody's taking on."

"Yes, you are, too. And I'll tell you what's the matter with you: you've got too much Fitzhugh in you."

Mrs. Kirby jumped up. She was a dark woman, and her face tightened now in a black passion. Elizabeth was always uneasy when she saw her mother like that, her mouth straight and cruel.

"It's always too much Fitzhugh when there's something you don't like. There's too much Fitzhugh when I get mad, when things go wrong. There's too much Fitzhugh in Brose—"

"Well, there certainly ain't no Kirby in him," Granny cackled.

"And I'm glad there's not. They've got such easy natures that anybody can take advantage of them. They have no more push in them than a grasshopper."

"Tain't while talking like that about your husband's family, Judy. They're fine people. They been in Richmond ever since it was a city, and everybody speaks high of them. Charles's great-great-grandfather bought one of the original lots and that's something to be proud of."

"What has it ever gotten them? They're just where they were when their ancestors were clerks in the old Shockoe Warehouse. And common men like this Milton Duke come along and grow rich while Charles thinks about what's fair. Why does n't he do some hoarding himself?"

"Oh, Mother —" Elizabeth started.

"Oh Mother nothing!" Judy Kirby whirled on her. "If you were n't so much like your father you would n't sit here all day pining over that Chester Cary."

Elizabeth jumped up, started for the door. She felt sick.

"That's right," her mother cried after her. "Go running away when anything happens you don't like."

Elizabeth forced herself to stop at the door and turn around. She was trembling. She could n't keep the tears out of her eyes or steady her voice.

"I'm not running away. It's just no use talking to you when you're like this. . . . I —"

"It's the Fitzhugh in her," Granny said triumphantly. "Never a body lived who could reason with one of them when their passion was running. They're a deep people, deep and dark. I don't know why you did n't get some of me in you, Judy, and Brose is more like Mordecai Fitzhugh than he was himself. I'll bet he's mighty happy now with a chance to kill all them people."

"Mamma! Are n't you ashamed to talk like that about your grandson!"

"Well, Mordecai killed a man, did n't he? Now look at his family. Leroy poking around on that farm out in the county and Lord only knows what his wife and children'll do now that he's in the army. He won't last it neither, mark my word. He won't have no more luck than any of the Fitzhughs ever had."

"In the name of God, Mamma, your brain's rattling around like one pea in a pan."

"Well," Granny said complacently, "every pea helps fill the peck."

The front door opened.

"Here comes Papa," Elizabeth said. "I—I'll be back for dinner." She ran out through the dining room into the kitchen. Marie was scowling over some thick slices of bacon which she was browning with bread crumbs in the cheese toaster.

"Used tuh have this heah foh ga'nish. Now it's po' Mistuh Chawles's dinnuh. Things keep on like this, don' know how we go' git enough vittels tuh keep body and soul tuhgethuh."

Elizabeth walked over to the window. She looked out at the dead grass in the back yard and pressed her forehead against the cool panes. The bell rang.

"Chile, can you go to the—" Marie broke off. "Now whut's got intuh you? I nevuh see such a family in my life for takin' on. Theah ain't been a soul laughin' in this house since Mistuh Brose lef'. . . ." She went grumbling out of the room.

Elizabeth quickly took out her handkerchief and dried her eyes. Oh, why could n't they laugh again and have peace? Everywhere there seemed nothing but hate. Marie charged back in the room.

"Miss Elizabeth!" Her voice was hoarse and excited. Elizabeth whirled around, the quick fear stabbing through her. Marie was awed.

"Soljuh out theah want foh to see Mistuh Chawles in private. All dressed up like he mout be gin'ral. They gone in pawlor. What you s'pose 't is?"

"I don't know, but I'll find out."

"You come back heah, tell me soon 's you know."

Elizabeth nodded, quietly opened the dining-room door. Behind her Marie was grumbling again. "Po' man's vittels git cold now."

In the sitting room, her mother and Granny were staring at one

another. Their quarrel was forgotten. They both held up warning fingers. She heard the rumble of voices through the double doors. Her mother was tiptoeing to the doors and Elizabeth followed. The stranger's voice was very formal. Then they heard Charles Kirby.

"But I told you my son's gone back to his regiment, and even if he had n't I would n't have him take part in any such tomfoolery as this."

"Is that the answer I'm to give Mr. Leatherbury?"

Elizabeth and her mother glanced quickly at one another.

"No." Her father's voice rose a little as it did when he was excited. "You tell your friend Mr. Leatherbury that my son is too busy fighting for his country to fight any duels, but if he is so set on having a duel, he can fight me. You tell him that."

Again Elizabeth and her mother exchanged glances. Mrs. Kirby's face had closed tight again and she turned back to the crack with her mouth drawn straight and her eyes narrowed.

"That's hardly the same thing, Mr. Kirby. I'm afraid you don't understand the nature of duels."

"And I'm afraid you don't understand that a war is going on, sir. I'm slaving to keep my store from being pushed to the wall by profiteers, so I can support my family while my two sons are away fighting for their country. One of them is just sixteen and has never been away from home in his life, and is up there in the woods in a camp, for Christmas. My older son did come home for four days,—the first time we've seen him in five months,—and he had to go back yesterday. His mother and sister and grandmother are here alone all the time, wondering if he's alive or dead. I come to a home like that for a quick dinner, and you come here and talk to me about duels, and tell me I don't understand them. I don't want to understand them, or the likes of you and your friend."

There was a short pause. Elizabeth saw the passion darken her mother's face.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Kirby. I—I'm afraid I did n't understand.

I shall tell Mr. Leatherbury he'll have to get someone else to act for him. Good day, sir."

Judy Kirby pulled back the sliding door with one violent gesture and Elizabeth, standing there in the sudden opening, saw her mother stalk up to a handsome officer, a young man like Chester.

"Wait a minute," Mrs. Kirby said. "What is this all about?"

"Why—I'd rather not say." The young man looked embarrassed.

"I'd rather you would say, young man. It's *my* son you're talking about. Why does this man want to fight him?"

The young man shifted, looked down, then looked appealingly at Mr. Kirby.

"Yes, why?" her father said. "It's only right that we should know what the trouble is."

"Well, you see—Mr. Leatherbury is a friend of Miss Wade's, Miss Mildred Wade—and he considers himself as her fiancé. It seems that Miss Wade met your son at night, when Mr. Leatherbury and her mother thought she was with friends—and Mr. Leatherbury considers that an insult to Miss Wade—meeting her out at night like that, I mean . . ."

"I don't see that that's any of Mr. Leatherbury's affair," Mrs. Kirby said.

The young man forced a smile. "Maybe not, but, you see, her family are all upset about it—not because it was your son, but her deceiving them like that—and her father is away in the army, and Mr. Leatherbury thought—well—that he should act for her father. But I agree with you—now is hardly the time for duels."

Elizabeth heard a dry cackle behind her. They all turned. Granny had walked to the door and was looking at the young man and shaking with laughter.

"Man wants to pick a fight with a Fitzhugh, and the nephew of Mordecai Fitzhugh. . . . Heh-heh-heh!"

"Granny!" Elizabeth, blood burning her cheeks, took the old lady's arm, and hurried her back into the dining room.

Now Elizabeth understood the lost look in Mildred Wade's smoky gray eyes that afternoon as she had stared at Brose. The war had done that. It was the war in her life and Chester's, too. The war kept Chester writing, kept her dreaming of him. In peace he would go to his father's law office. He would become a statesman, and in a house like the Wades' he would have a wife like Mildred, and she would never see him again. Everything now was the war . . . her brothers away, her father's store failing . . . But why did the war bring her this . . . so that long after it was over, she would remember Chester?

February 1862

CHAPTER VIII

“Roanoke Island is important for the defense of Norfolk . . . and the Secretary of War had timely notice of the entire inadequacy of the defenses, the want of men and munitions of war, and the threatening attitude of the enemy. . . . If the Secretary of War . . . had not the means to reinforce General Wise, why was he not ordered to abandon his position and save his command? . . .”—*Report of the investigating committee of the Confederate House of Representatives*

They were a long time unloading the coffin. St. George Paxton, pressed against the outside wall of the waiting room, was cold with his hat off. The glare from the torches of the guard wavered over the Confederate flag draped across the box. The pallbearers moved slowly along the depot platform to the street. St. George shivered when the muffled drums rolled the death march. The militia tramped up Broad Street hill to the mournful beat.

St. George replaced his hat and went inside the waiting room to warm his hands around the pot-bellied stove. Virginius Kirby turned away from the ticket window. He looked worried. He was not the same man St. George had met last summer in the War Office. His cheeks were still pink, but they sagged now, and the pouches under his eyes were gray. As he stood there, lost in his own thoughts, absent-mindedly pulling his greatcoat around his throat, the tight composure he held on himself fell away. He was a cruelly driven man. He moved toward the door, and St. George spoke to him quietly.

At once the restraint drew his face together, like a mask fitted on. “Oh, good evening, St. George. I’ve been trying to get some

information about these accursed trains, so I can bring my wife and son back from the Valley. I think we're going to have some action up there from this man Jackson when the weather breaks, and my wife's family are in a danger zone. But I can't get a thing out of the Virginia Central. All the railroads are just as bad, though. I suppose you were down watching them bring in young Wise?"

St. George nodded. "A dreadful thing. Jennings Wise was a fine boy, a very promising one. And I don't mean only as an officer. He was one of the best newspaper editors we had in the state. Did you know his father?"

"No, but he was in the office before he took his men to Roanoke Island, begging Benjamin for reënforcements. Benjamin talked and said nothing as usual, very suave and diplomatic about it all, and went back to his Madeira and Havanas while the Blues were wiped out."

"It was all a very bad business."

"Terrible. Terrible." There was a pause. "Can I offer you a lift in my carriage?" Virginius asked abruptly.

"Thank you, Virginius. I had intended walking with the escort, but I'm chilled to the bone." St. George passed through the door which Virginius Kirby held open, holding his coat collar about his ears.

At the carriage, Virginius hesitated, then said: "Would you care to come to my home and have a nightcap with me? I have one bottle left of excellent old Marquis de Pombal, and you've never been in my home, you know."

St. George understood at a glance that the man wanted companionship. "I should be delighted, Virginius."

They sank back in the cushions and Virginius pulled about them a thick laprobe.

"Yes, it was a terrible business," Virginius went on as though there had been no interruption. "Roanoke Island opens the way to Norfolk, and it could have been held. I've never regarded Ex-Governor Wise highly as a military man, but apparently the

Blues and the other troops did all that was humanly possible. I can't understand why Benjamin did nothing."

"What can he do? It's not the War Department; it's the Administration. Davis is running everything and according to him, and his ideals, we're not fighting a war, we're defending our rights. I used to complain about the way Memminger ran the Treasury Department. But it's no use. He's just a rubber stamp for the President, like Benjamin and all the others. The place where Benjamin would be really useful is the diplomatic service. He has that type of brain. He's shrewd, patient, and devious."

"He's too devious for our good. I don't trust him."

"No, Virginius, I think he's honest, and he would have been a far better man to send to England than Mason. If Davis were shrewd, he would've sent Benjamin to Europe while the Yankees had Mason and Slidell in prison. That's when we had England's sympathy."

"Don't you think we have it now? They're debating recognizing us."

"And they'll keep on debating until they see which side wins. The United States has backed down and England has saved her dignity. Now they're looking out after their interests, and only that."

"But, good God, they've got to have cotton."

"That's what everybody thinks," St. George snorted. "Don't you think England would rather have a few mills shut for a while than to make an enemy of the United States? They're giving it a long view."

"If they gave it a long enough view, they'd see that would risk their textile markets."

"They're not seeing it *that* long, Virginius. Lord John Russell wants to make a good showing for Queen Victoria — while *he's* alive. Textile markets will be something for other generations to worry about. No, we lost our chance with cotton when we did n't borrow their gold with cotton security. It's too late now, with the blockade tightening the way it is."

"Damn that blockade — dumping ships full of rocks in Charleston Harbor! Are we to go on forever making speeches about our constitutional rights, while the United States ruins our harbors, our commerce, and overruns our country? The way they're winning in the West, all of Tennessee and Kentucky will soon be open to the scoundrels."

"Anyway, we'll probably have a new War Secretary now. Public clamor will force Benjamin to resign."

"That does n't get us back all the months we've lost, proving to the world that we're nonaggressors, while they plan another 'On to Richmond' as soon as spring comes."

"No, and it does n't get us back Roanoke Island and the men we lost there. I met a young man in the Blues on Secession Night who, I understand, was wounded and captured there. Leatherbury his name was. You know him?"

"Leatherbury. . . . Oh, yes, I've heard of him. Very curious."

St. George waited. The carriage drew to a stop at the curb.

"Well, here we are." Virginius offered St. George a hand. The brick house was built close to the street, a flagstone court in front enclosed by a tall, iron-railed fence. Marble blocks on either side of the stone steps projected almost to the gate. A low light burned in the hallway and St. George noticed that the brass on the white door needed attention.

Inside, the house was not too warm, and Virginius hurried into the library, talking nervously.

"I've had to let my butler and housemaid go. The groom doubles in brass on special occasions, but I can't bother him after a night like this. The cook, poor soul, is worn out by taking care of the whole house while my wife's away."

The library was warmer. A low fire burned in the grate and Virginius immediately started rattling it and piling on fresh chunks out of a dull brass scuttle. "I don't own one of the niggers. Grace — Mrs. Kirby — owns her personal maid, her family gave her when she was married. But I don't believe in slavery."

"I don't myself. My father freed them all before I remember."

chair and took his overcoat off. He went over and warmed his hands.

"There we are." Virginius straightened. His hair was grayer in the glow of the fire. "Can't keep so many fires these days with wood at eight dollars a cord! But thank God for that port. I've been keeping it for such an occasion. If you'll excuse me—"

St. George nodded. He glanced at the comfortable room, obviously the room of the man of the house and one he shared little. It was not too neat. Dust was gathering. There was a not unpleasant smell of stale tobacco. There were more books than he had expected. His war friend was a strange man. If only he could manage some judicious probing . . .

Virginius Kirby returned, divested of his greatcoat and bearing a lacquer tray containing the bottle and two glasses and, of all things, a humidor. Virginius was smiling brightly. His eyes were lit now. This was plainly a rôle he enjoyed.

"I've been carrying my cigars all over the house since I've been alone," he explained. He set the tray on his littered desk, expertly removed the cork.

"That's a very handsome tray," St. George said as the bottle was handed him. "Thank you."

"A present from my wife's family. Their presents have been cluttering the house up for years. They'll come in handy soon for cash. You know, I've lost my law practice completely now, and our salaries—"

St. George set the bottle down. "Our salaries were a joke at first, but they're no joke now the way prices are rising." He took a cigar from the proffered humidor. There were only three left.

Virginius took one, giving the humidor a sad glance. Then he poured himself a glass. They touched them. They sipped.

"Superb." St. George smiled. The heavy liquor warmed him all through.

Virginius beamed. "Won't you sit down?"

St. George relaxed, eyed his new friend. "About that Leatherbury fellow—you said it was curious?" He sipped.

"Oh, yes. Man wanted to challenge my nephew to a duel. He'd

have been killed. But my brother told him it was all foolishness in a time like this."

"Your brother was right. A duel indeed. Leatherbury must've been powerfully provoked."

Virginus laughed, puffed at his cigar. "Hah. It seems he wanted to defend the honor of some lady who had met my nephew secretly at night, on the street. I reckon it was reckless of my nephew, — as she was indeed a lady, — but he's a hot-blooded young hellion. Time will take it out of him, worse luck."

"It is strange what a man will do in his youth."

"Is n't it?" Virginus' eyes turned inward and on his tired face spread the first expression of peace St. George had ever observed there.

"And how life subdues us," St. George said. "I've had my share of crazy things that I'd like to live over, once more. I suppose we all have."

"I suppose." Virginus' voice showed how far away his thoughts were. "I had one I'd like to live over — not once but forever."

"That kind, eh?" St. George blew out a great cloud of smoke.

Virginus nodded. "It was my first wife."

"Oh. The present Mrs. Kirby is your second wife? I wondered why your son was only — twelve, is n't he?"

"Just. My second marriage was n't until I was forty. My first wife died when I was twenty-six. It took me that long to get over it."

"You must have loved her very much."

Virginus came out of his past and looked steadily at St. George. He reached in his desk and drew out a small daguerreotype in a carved wooden frame. He silently passed it to the older man.

A young woman looked directly out with intense eyes. She was beautiful in a high-tempered and passionate way. Obviously a woman you fell in love with when you were young, St. George reflected, but hardly the sort you married.

"That's my wife," Virginus said. "Some day I'll tell you about her."

"A Southern exchange . . . urges the planters of the South to curtail their planting operations for the coming season and devote all their energies to the production of the great necessities of life. . . . Grave would be the consequences of disregarding the injunction and entailing . . . another year of famine prices. . . . It is impossible to predict when the blockade will be lifted and . . . the main business of all who have not muskets on their shoulders should be to produce what is needful to support our armies. . . ."—*Richmond Whig*

Under the beady eye of Milton Duke, Philip Parramore gave the room a final inspection. He was a little sad to be leaving his old room. Unhappiness he had known here, and despair, but it had been a comfortable sanctuary against the world. He remembered nights with the lamp turned low and the shades drawn when he had imagined himself like Edgar Poe, who had once lived in a room like this a few doors down the street, a lost and melancholy soul, alone in his sombre room where only the dark gods of his brooding understood him. Now, at the moment of breaking with his dream life, of leaving his secure backwater, he felt uneasy. It was like a premonition that he was moving out beyond his depth.

"I reckon you got everything," Milton Duke drawled. "This is a right nice room, better than the one what you're gittin' at the Spotswood. But that's the place for a young lieutenant in the Medical Depa'tment."

Philip nodded abstractedly. "Yes. But it seems strange to be exchanging rooms with a Congressman and his wife."

"Don't you be worryin' yohself 'bout that. A boa'din' house is good enough for a Congressman, but not for a risin' figguh in the Confederacy. You got to be where things are happenin', so's you can talk to the bigwigs."

Philip looked at the gaunt, leathery man. The crafty look that never left Duke's eyes bothered him. Philip remembered his days back in Mr. Kirby's drugstore when they used to suspect Milton Duke of sharp trading. A sudden nostalgia for the placid safety of those days overwhelmed him.

"I don't know, Mr. Duke," he said. "I feel like I'm getting in over my head."

Milton Duke screwed up his face in a dry laugh. "You ain't done nothin' yet but help swing a few orduhs my way, and you won't have to worry 'bout that much longer, 'cause pretty soon I'm goin' to git a stranglehold on most of the medical supplies in these parts. I was just startin' with drugs. Why—" his voice lowered to a hoarse whisper—"I'm storin' away stuff now, like chloroform, that cain't hardly nobody else git his hands on. In another year they'll have to be comin' to me. And I'm go' take care of them what help me, Philip. Don't you worry 'bout gittin' found out."

Philip crossed to the window, looked down at the bleak grounds of the square. "I'm not worryin' so much about that; but suppose the war should end?"

"War end before another year? Be another year after that and maybe moh. You can see the Nawth is set out to conquer the whole South. They're takin' all them fo'ts in the West and comin' in from the Mississippi. They're takin' them in the Ca'linas and comin' in on the East coast. They're 'bout to go after N'Awleans and they're gittin' set to come after Richmond agin. But they got to come a long ways and do a heap more fittin' before the South'll quit. Man, they hate them Yankees now. Even the wimmen."

"Yes, but the blockade is getting so tight, I can't see how they'll last."

"That's where you're wrong, Philip." His voice lowered again. "We're gittin' through just enough blockade runners to keep the people staggerin' along, give 'em a little hope. That's where the wimmen come in. They've gotten such a hate on the Yankees they'll do 'thout things they would n't a done before. And Renzo

has got things fixed with the blockade runners so we're gittin' a good crack at anything that lands."

"Suppose Lorenzo gets drafted? You know they're talking of pushing through a conscript bill."

"My boy ain't goin' to be no soljuh." His voice became harsh and grating. "I've looked into gittin' substitutes. Theah's hundreds who 'll go for a thousand dolluhs. I'm goin' to git them lined up and become a agent for them, sort of a substitute brokuh. By the way, Philip, that's where you could line your pockets a little moh. Lot of fellows will be comin' to you lookin' for ways of gittin' out, and if you sent them to me—"

"No. No!" Philip whirled from the window. "I don't want any more to do with it. I wish I was out of this now."

The seamy face hardened like a piece of dried leather. The eyes grew small and cold. Philip could n't look at him. He turned back to the window. After a moment the voice came again in its ingratiating whine.

"I reckon you've come up so fast, son, it's sort o' scared you. You're a fellow to study 'bout the aristocrats and not figguh to do anything 'bout it. But I ain't like you. I don't want to know 'em. I want to hurt 'em like they've done me all these years. I wa'n't dirt under theah feet. My son wa'n't good enough for 'em to play with. I'm goin' to show 'em. They'll have to come to Milton Duke for what they want and they'll be beggin' Renzo to play with 'em. You stick with me, and they'll come to you too. Then you'll be invited to their homes and you can have theah wimmen."

An open carriage moved through the Capitol Square gates. A young woman in fine furs leaned back in the seat beside an older man wearing a beaver, a pompous-looking man of the type who had always made Philip's old poses falter. How often he had dreamed of riding beside a lady like that and having one of those pompous old men unbend and beam on him. *Here's some Hennessy brandy that ran the blockade, my boy. . . . We'll have a nip before we join the ladies. . . .*

Milton Duke was standing beside him, his hand on his shoulder.

"Sho, you 'll be ridin' in a carriage same like that, all yoh own, with a pretty gal like that beside you. 'N' you can be takin' her to yoh own house."

Philip looked at him quickly. "House?"

"Sho. These aristocrats are bein' squeezed out o' theah fine houses and we can buy them up cheap, and after the war we'll be top dog."

" . . . Have repudiated the foolish conceit that the inhabitants of this Confederacy are still citizens of the United States, for they are waging an indiscriminate war upon them all with a savage ferocity unknown to modern civilization. . . ." — *President Davis*

The rain was cold and thin and gray and it fell steadily, as though it would never cease. From St. Paul's Church to the Capitol and from the Valentine house across the square to the old bell tower at the foot of the hill stretched a sagging, ragged tent of umbrellas. The water gleamed on the iron George Washington, and it ran in rivulets from his horse to the stone, and trickled down on his statued Revolutionary friends. Among those metal images the living man looked thin and pale and very puny.

From where the hill dipped, Martha Fitchett could barely glimpse him. She raised on tiptoe until she was tired, then she rested again.

"Heah anything he's sayin'?" Mary Mattox asked her.

"Caught something 'bout mistakes we made, but could n't make head or tail of it."

"I ain't heard a word he said. Reckon they'll ask us back home what he said."

"Reckon so. He's a fine-lookin' man, ain't he?"

"A little peaked for my likin'."

"You'd be peaked too if you had the worries what he's got."

"I got worries 'nough of my own with the boad'in' house, the way the prices goin' up all the time."

"Maybe now that he's inaugurated and a real President, he'll make things better foh us."

"I sure hope so. I'm mouty tired drinkin' chicory for coffee and eatin' this second-flour bread. I reckon you're tired havin' it put befoh you, Martha. But you're lucky to git that—not that I'm throwin' it up to you, the boad' you're payin'."

"I know you ain't, Mary. I know you're doin' the best you can with what you git from us all. I don't know what I'd do if you had to go ary bit higher. I ain't sent Joe nothin' since Christmas like 't is. I wonder if'n it's rainin' whuh he is."

"If it is, he's got sense 'nough to come out'n it."

"Cain't git out'n it. He sleeps between some logs piled up on both sides with his rubber cloth under his po' ca'cass and a tent flap over him. Let me tell you, one night when it rained his haid got out and got wet and he put on his hat to git dry. What do you s'pose happened? His hat was full of water and drenched him. He said it rains all the time."

"Po' boy. I hope something comes out'n all what we're goin' through."

"I pray God so. It's mouty hard to lose your home when you git to be my age. Joe was born in thet house. It was cruel hard to have to give it up. But I don't know what I'd done 'thout you, Mary. 'T ain't many givin' boad' for the price you are."

A cheer arose from around the thin, pale man and everyone around them said, "Sh-h-h."

"What's he sayin'?" Mary whispered.

They both tiptoed again. "I can't heah nary word he says."

"'T ain't while tryin'." Mary stood again. "I ain't heard ary word he said neither. I got to be gittin' home soon, too. My feet's soakin'."

"What'll we tell 'em back home?"

"Just say we seen President Davis inaugurated."

CHAPTER IX

"Your old home, if not destroyed, has been so desecrated that I cannot bear to think of it. I should have preferred it to have been wiped from the earth . . . rather than to have been degraded by the presence of those who revel in the ill they do for their own selfish purposes." — *General Lee to his daughter*

By standing at the edge of the rear balcony and leaning around the stone column, Mildred glimpsed a slice of Main Street where Longstreet's men were passing through the crowd. The blue tone had faded from their uniforms. They looked dust-gray. Gone from their backs were the knapsacks with the neat roll of blanket and oilcloth on top. Now the oilcloth and blanket were rolled and slung over their left shoulders, tied beside their right hips. Canteens flapped under the roll, in the small of their backs. For the fine knapsacks, thin haversacks of canvas or burlap swung out from their left hips, suspended by a cord over their right shoulders. There were patches, patches everywhere. That's what Brose had used his mother's needlecase for.

It had been an April day like this before the night she had first seen him. On that year-ago afternoon she had sat on the balcony, her hair drying, and she wondered what to say to Dennis that evening. The garden was the same to-day as then. The rambler rosebuds covered the wall and new blossoms sweetened the lindens, and the light green grass was bordered with the fresh colors of jonquils and tulips and hyacinths. But she was not the same. *None of us will ever be the same again.* . . . She had not been the same since Secession Night, when she had seen him in his high-buttoned brown coat and wide cravat and his eyes glowed darkly

in the torches' glare. Then the trumpets sounded. Now a drum rolled and he was one of those men in patched, dusty gray with a blanket over his shoulder and a musket in his hand, marching in the dazzling April sun to the Peninsula, to stop McClellan's advance on Richmond.

"Are you looking for him?"

Mildred was startled by the sound as well as the words. Then, as she spun around, she was bewildered by her mother's expression. Above the full, black Garibaldi blouse, with its neat row of buttons reaching to her white collar, Mrs. Wade's face was curiously calm. There was none of the usual shocked reproach in her eyes; they were unnaturally steady.

"Don't think I don't understand, Mildred." Her voice was as calm as her expression, but Mildred sensed a strain in it. "I know I went to pieces around Christmas time, but I have learned since that the war does change things."

"Since Kensington?" Mildred studied a stranger.

Her mother nodded. "When your father's family can be driven out from a home they've lived in for two hundred years and have to come to us like beggars—then it was brought home to me."

Mildred waited, unsure of her.

Mrs. Wade forced a little laugh. "I reckon you-all thought I did n't know what was going on. I really did n't have any feeling about the North. I had n't followed all the interminable arguments, and the war was just a hateful thing to me. All I wanted was for it to be over, so your father could come home and we could go on with our normal lives. I did n't care whether we were in the United States or the Confederacy, except for your father's sake. . . . Now I understand all their talk about the North and the South. I know we can't be in the same country with people who'd do what those Northern men did to the women at Kensington—and, Mildred, I know it's changing us all. I really do know that now. You remember the night we had the terrible quarrel over Mr. Kirby?"

Mildred nodded, still bitter with that memory.

"Well, you said that things weren't the same, would never be the same again, no matter how much we wished it . . ." She faltered, then forced out the words, "Mildred, I understand you now."

"I'm sorry, Mother, that I had to be right," she said quietly.

"Oh, it would've been better if I had seen it sooner." She hurried on, anxious to talk. "But in those days I could n't think of anything except that your father was away, and I believed everything would be right as soon as he came back. I heard tales of barns burned and people forced out of their homes, and all that, but my own people are here in the city and none of my older brothers was in the army. It never entered my mind that anything could happen to the Wade place. But when I saw those old ladies and little girls last week, sick and terrified, with nothing but their luggage and a few boxes, and they told me what they had gone through . . . their slaves run off, their piano cut up for firewood right before their eyes, and their old family portraits and carpets cut with bayonets just out of fiendishness —"

"Don't think of it, Mother."

From below the cheers surged up.

"I can't help it. I was so blind, thinking I was helping by sewing socks and making tents out of sailcloth and —"

"But you understand now." Mildred turned to look down to Main Street again.

"Yes, I understand now, but . . . Mildred . . . I hope you don't hold any bitterness against me for that night."

"I don't hold any bitterness against anyone." The crowd had thickened around the columns of gray men and were pressing among them.

"But you don't know how it worried me, having you do something like that, and . . . and that dreadful scene with your father, after Dennis had gone. Poor Dennis, with his arm amputated, lying in a Yankee hospital prison. . . . How is he getting on?"

"The last I heard, which was on Easter, at St. Paul's, was that he

was doing fine, and would leave the hospital as soon as he was exchanged."

"Poor boy. Oh, I do hope there will be no more trouble. . . . Mildred, you won't see this Kirby man, will you?"

"No." Some school girls were giving the soldiers trays of food.

"You promised your father you would n't, not as long as he lived."

"I remember that promise." She heard the cries and the gay voices of girls who had made no promises.

"Yet, you're standing here, looking for him?"

"I can't help that."

Her mother was silent. Then she moved beside Mildred and placed a hand timidly on her shoulder.

"Do you know his company and regiment?"

"I even know his platoon and lieutenants." She said, as if memorizing: "Company D, First Virginia Regiment, A. P. Hill's brigade, Longstreet's division."

"A. P. Hill's brigade! That's not Ambrose Hill?" She tried to sound bright and natural.

Mildred nodded, watching the women and older men touch the soldiers and kiss them. Was his mother among them? Where was the little blue sewing case now?

"I can scarcely believe that boy is a brigadier," Mrs. Wade went on with strained cheerfulness. "I remember when he came to Richmond on a vacation from West Point. He was a classmate of George Pickett."

Mildred felt her mother's effort to reach her. "George Pickett has a brigade in that division too," she said.

"Good heavens, he was such a dandy, with his flowing hair and his curled moustaches, all perfumed. Do you remember a party you went to when he was on a furlough from the army?"

"Yes, I remember. His sister was with him, and she sang."

"I believe she did. You know George Pickett's uncle, Mr. Johnston, the lawyer? Well, he was once associated in law with

Lincoln, and he told me the other day that Lincoln himself recommended George Pickett for his West Point appointment, even wrote him letters of advice. . . ." She stopped. All the eagerness went out of her. "Oh, to think of those boys now fighting for their very lives to defend their homes against men who were their friends and even roommates! I just can't understand what has come over those Northerners. They talk all the time about keeping us in the same country, but everything they do shows they hate us. Their one object seems to be to wipe Richmond from the face of the earth."

An old lady ran along the ranks, staggering under a basket of food.

"Try not to think of it so much," Mildred said.

"How can you help thinking of it?" Her mother's voice quivered with its old strain, verging toward hysteria. "When I see those women of your father's own family, and those little girls, refugees right here in this house!"

"But Mother, it is n't just our family. The whole city is full of refugees."

"I don't see how you can be so calm about it. Your own father is fighting up there in the Valley with Jackson. At this very minute, while we're standing here, he might be lying somewhere, wounded or —"

"Yes, he might be, but thinking of it is n't going to help him any. Why don't you try to think instead that he's with our only army that's winning battles?"

"Yes, other people tell me that, but—but, there must be something we could do!"

"There is nothing we can do, but wait."

"We can pray!"

"Don't you think the men who were killed at Shiloh and all those other terrible defeats in the West had prayers for them? Don't you suppose somebody prayed for General Albert Sidney Johnston?"

"Don't you say your prayers any more?" Her mother was stricken.

"Yes, but I don't believe in them. I don't believe in anything any more."

"It's that Kirby man!" Her mother's hysteria was back. "I know it."

"Yes! Yes, it's that Kirby man. Everything is that Kirby man and I can't help it. There's nothing I can do about it. My heart aches because he's walking by in those dusty rags, on his way to defend our own home, and I'm not one of the girls giving him something. Now you know, will you let me alone?"

Her mother backed away. Her eyes grew wider and wider. Her lips trembled open, as if she would speak. But she was incapable of another effort. She turned quickly, and hurried into the house.

In a loneliness such as she had never known before, Mildred stared at the last of the gray men passing through the crowd. Somewhere in that long line moving to the Peninsula had been Brose. She wondered if he had glanced up at her house. The last company of foot soldiers passed. Horseshoes clanged on the flagstones and gun carriages rumbled over the cobbles. She recognized the Howitzers, with no brass buttons shining now. They wore short jackets and rocked on the iron-seated caissons. One of them was his brother. His name was Paul. He was a sweet boy and he looked up to Brose.

Mildred closed her eyes. She backed slowly away from the stone column. A bugle called. She shivered. She turned blindly and moved into the house. She heard the low murmurings of the women's voices from the living room. Mildred opened the door. None of them heard her. She stood and looked at them as they worked on bandages. The two little girls were bandaging a Confederate doll.

Aunt Abbie scraped lint slowly and carefully, steadying fingers that were shadowed by deep blue veins. She was no kin of Mildred's, as blood went, but as their family counted it she was a kinswoman. She had married the son of Dinwiddie Wade's great-uncle, he who had been the brother of the first Wade to come to

Richmond. Her husband was long since dead and Aunt Abbie must have been over eighty.

Her two daughters also scraped lint and they were no defter than the old lady. But it was not their hands they had to steady. Cousin Emma Jane, who was sixty, had two sons and a son-in-law in the army, and Cousin Flora, an old maid in her fifties, had mothered all the young men in the family. They passed the lint to Isobel Wade and to Cousin Emma Jane's daughter-in-law, Constance. Mildred's mother formed it into "tents," the conically shaped plugs for wounds, and Constance rolled it into *boulettes*, tight balls for absorption in cavities. A pile waited for Mildred, to smooth in long rolls and tie in the centre. She listened to five-year-old Sarah Jane, who was playing the nurse.

"Did a Yankee shoot you, soldier?"

"Ten Yankees shot me," Harriet said indignantly. She was eight and apparently playing the soldier.

"Goodness gracious! All ten?"

"Course not." Harriet was scornful. "Ten shot *at* me, but only one shot me before I killed them all."

"Oh. What were they after you for, soldier?"

"They were after my little girls, that's what." Harriet scowled ferociously at the thought.

"What were they doing to your little girls?"

"They were going to eat them."

"They were not!" Bandaging stopped abruptly on the doll.

"They were too. I reckon I saw them."

"Yankees don't eat little girls." Sarah Jane was no longer the nurse.

"They do too."

"They did n't eat us," Sarah Jane said triumphantly.

"That's only because Mother and Grandmother were there. Else —"

"I don't believe it. Mother! Do Yankees eat little girls?"

Constance Carter Wade was thirty years old. She was a handsome woman, who had never been pretty, but her face was strong

with character. Now it was set in harsh lines. Her younger brother had been killed at the fall of New Bern. She held the gaze of her children and said in dead, measured tones:—

"They don't eat them. They just burn their houses and put them out in the rainy night as you were, to become exiles and beggars. They shoot their fathers and insult their mothers and—"

"Constance." Aunt Abbie shook her head. "You should n't put such ideas in their little heads. Let them forget that night—"

"I don't want them to forget that night," she said with venom. "As long as they live I want them to remember it was Yankees who drove them out of their home and ruined it so it would n't be fit for dogs."

"But it's wrong to instill hatred like that. Besides, we'll go back to our home as soon as the boys come back."

"No, Mother," Cousin Emma Jane said, "we won't go back." She was a quiet woman whose thoughts most often turned to her husband, Jack Wade. He had consumed brandy until his liver would stand no more, but no one in the world, she said, had ever laughed as he did. "I never want to go back to Kensington. They put their muddy boots on the table where Jack used to drink and they used his own decanter . . . then stole it."

"Oh, children," the old lady began.

"We're not children any more, Mother," Cousin Flora said. There was nothing quiet about her. As vigorous as the fox-hunting men of her family, but carrying nearly two hundred pounds on slender ankles, she talked to release her energy. "Nobody wants to go back to Kensington. It'd be like sleeping in a bed after vermin had been in it, if there're any beds left. The way they were carting off things to send their homes I don't know if there's anything left—except their human filth, which they were free enough with."

"But . . . but I could n't live anywhere else. You children were born there, and my grandchildren, and Sarah Jane and Harriet. They'll have to grow up at Kensington."

"I don't want to go back there," Harriet said firmly. "Yankees make it smell bad—Uncle Tiberius told me so."

"You won't go back," Constance said. "Anyway, it's not safe. You'd all better come with me and the children to my family in North Carolina."

"Why, Constance!" Aunt Abbie was shocked. "We can't live in *North Carolina*."

"And why not?"

"Because . . . because we've always lived in Virginia."

"Apparently the Yankees don't intend to let you, or any of us, live here any longer. Ever since McClellan landed his army at Yorktown, their one objective has been to get to Richmond, and we've got nothing to stop them."

"And the way Mr. Davis sees fit to run things," Cousin Flora said, "we would n't stop them if we could. The idea of appointing that Jew Benjamin Secretary of State! It looks as if he wanted to reward him for making a botch of being Secretary of War. I wish I had my way with that War Department for five minutes. You'd see some fighting then, I'll tell you, instead of all this shilly-shallying."

"I don't know," Isobel Wade said; "it's very easy to criticize. I just saw a body of men passing through here on their way to stop McClellan, and —"

"Isobel, if you'd been mistreated by those Yankee scum as we have, you'd want to get as far away from them as possible. I think you'd better join us and come with Constance. You could rent out this big house and —"

"I'll never leave my home."

"That's what we said." Constance's voice made Mildred wince. "And remember, Kensington was just a stop on the way. Richmond is what they want."

"And don't forget," Flora said, "if they give up Norfolk, the Yankee gunboats can shell this city. Then where would you be?"

"Right here." There was a firmness on her then that surprised them all. They looked at her as they might at a stranger, and Mildred felt a sudden rush of inexplicable pity for her mother, who, such a short time ago, had been a young girl.

"That's the way to talk, Mildred," Aunt Abbie began.

"It might be the way for her to talk," Flora snapped, "but not for you. You're coming with us to Constance's family in North Carolina, and Isobel can stay here and entertain the Yankees if she wants to."

Aunt Abbie said nothing. Her hands returned to her lint. But they barely moved now. Her eyes were seeing other things.

What was she remembering of her dead life on that plantation by the slow-flowing James? Sixty years she had lived there, since the turn of the nineteenth century. Perhaps she remembered her chair on the wide lawn that sloped to the river, where she used to sit in the waning Southern afternoons, when Mildred was a young girl playing with Harriet, who was then a baby, and Constance and Ben would come back from a ride and have a champagne lemonade under the large poplar tree. Aunt Abbie was too old to understand that it was lost, that it would never be the same again for her.

But did any of these women understand it? Did even she really know what was happening to their world and happening inside them? How could any of them know, living in this pathetic half-world of women? A sterile house of women, of young and old women, of middle-aged and children, they pieced out their hours by pitiful makeshifts. Sewing socks and making bandages for unknown soldiers, cooking and nursing for sick soldiers, giving parties and dances for furloughed soldiers, they devoted their lives to countless, nameless, dusty gray, patched soldiers they had never seen and some of whom would never be seen again by a living woman. It was all to keep their minds busy, so their thoughts would not turn to the omnipresent fear that *their* soldier might be one who would never be seen again by a woman. But of all they wanted their hands were empty, and all they really knew was that they waited, waited. . . .

CHAPTER X

"What is this on their part but to overturn the principle upon which their government as well as ours is based . . . that governments derive 'their just powers from the consent of the governed.' . . . We quit them as their ancestors and our ancestors quit the British government—upon a question of constitutional right. . . . Why this on their part against the uniform principles and practices of their own government . . . against reason, against justice, against nature. . . . What is it all for?"—*Vice President Stephens*

Elizabeth had never seen a wounded man before. Chester said it was n't anything, just where a minnie ball had passed through the flesh of his arm. He would be back with his command before the end of May. But that bulge under his sleeve looked scary. It swelled the new sergeant's chevrons that looked so bright against the faded gray cloth. He might have lost his arm. That man named Leatherbury, who had wanted to fight a duel with Brose, had lost his arm, Uncle Virginius had told them. And Chester's wind-tanned face was so sallow and drawn, and his eyes never laughed any more.

For one breathless moment she longed to rid herself of the conviction that anything between Chester and her was unnatural. But she could not forget that world of Mildred Wade's, in which he moved and in which he belonged. She knew that was no place for her, and her world was no place for him.

The door to the hall opened silently and her father stood there. Her mother and Chester leaned forward in their chairs. Elizabeth felt her breath catch, her father looked so haggard, his eyes so dulled. He shook his head at them.

"Nothing's wrong," he said in his tired voice. "I just closed the store because . . . because everything else is closed, and . . . and the streets are filled with nothing but people fleeing the city."

"Do you think we should leave?" Mrs. Kirby asked.

He slouched into the room, shaking his head, and dropped into his rocker. "I don't know what to think."

"I know the Yankees are going to take Richmond, and Virginia, and all the South." Granny rocked complacently. "I've always told you so. It's because we built railroads. They're going to take all the slaves and free negroes and ride them away on the railroads."

"Mamma, for the Lord's sake, will you stop prattling? Have n't we got enough to worry about with gunboats on the river trying to shell us in our homes?" Mrs. Kirby threw aside the bag with the needle and heavy yarn in it. "And I might as well stop working on these sandbags, and start thinking about packing."

"We'll use those sandbags, Mrs. Kirby," Chester said quietly. "Even if the gunboats do shell us, it'll still take McClellan's army to come in and possess the city. And he'll have to fight us to do it."

"I'd like to know what you'll be fighting for, with Richmond in ashes. They took Nashville and New Orleans and now Norfolk's evacuated, and I certainly don't think that little old river fort at Drewry's Bluff will stop them here. And as for the army, Joe Johnston will just keep on retreating until he gets to the Mississippi. They brought Brose and Paul and all the soldiers from the north of the state down to the Peninsula in April, and all they've done for the past month is move backward to Richmond. Would've made more sense if they'd stayed here in the first place and built a fort, instead of waiting until the gunboats were on us before they started one."

"They know what they're doing, Mrs. Kirby." There was no boyishness in Chester's voice any more. It was subdued and there was firmness in it now. "We have n't had enough men here to do anything but move backward. But that has delayed McClellan while we've been bringing up men from all over the South, and getting conscripts in the army. We have n't been ready yet to give

that big army of McClellan's a battle. He's got over a hundred thousand men."

"You gave him a battle at Williamsburg."

"That was just a rear-guard action, Mrs. Kirby." His patience made Elizabeth ashamed. "They were pushing our retreat too fast and Longstreet turned on them."

Mr. Kirby stirred. "Brose wrote you that, Judy. He told you that McClellan's army was three times as big."

"Then why don't they bring Jackson's army down from the Valley? He fights three armies and licks them, too."

"Jackson is keeping them from overrunning the Valley," Chester said. "It's not just that McClellan's army is bigger than ours. The Union army is three times bigger than ours. We have to keep shifting men around. When we can get enough here, we'll give them a battle."

"When they've retreated to our back yards, I reckon."

"No'm. Those sandbags you-all 've been working on are for the fortifications around the city, from five to seven miles out. And they're good, too. General Lee knows fortifications."

"I hope 'Evacuating' Lee knows something. I certainly don't think much of the military advice he's given the President."

"You must n't believe all you read in the newspapers, Mrs. Kirby. Lee has an almost hopeless task in building a defense for Richmond. We're vulnerable from nearly all sides and with no natural defenses."

"Well, if that's the case, why did he wait until now, when the gunboats are on us, to build that fort at Drewry's Bluff?"

"We did n't have the money. Richmond just started to make contributions to her own defense. And now they're working like beavers over there. They've got the heavy guns and the crew from the *Virginia*—"

"Yes! The *Virginia*. Why did they sink that?"

"They had to when we evacuated Norfolk because we could n't get it up the river. Its guns will do more good at the fort, anyway."

"And that little river fort is all there is between us and the gunboats?"

"Well, they've sunk ships in the river as obstructions and the riverbanks are lined with sharpshooters."

"Then, I must say, the people leaving the city are showing more sense than we are."

Mr. Kirby shifted in his chair. "Judy, we'll leave if you want to. But if the city did n't fall, our home would be ruined by the strangers in town. The streets are filled with ruffians and stragglers and —"

Thunder rolled over his words. He stiffened with his mouth frozen on an unuttered word. Glass rattled in the windows and the house shook. Everyone jumped up except Granny. She stopped rocking and sat bolt upright in her chair. Then it crashed again. The door to the dining room was flung open and Marie stumbled into the room.

"Oh, Jesus," she was moaning. "Oh, Jesus, save us now."

Thunder rocked the house and the floor trembled under them.

"They're the guns from Drewry's Bluff answering," Chester said. His voice was hardly above a whisper. Mr. Kirby was as white as death. His wife's face was darkly flushed and her mouth was drawn. Granny sat there as though she had been turned to stone.

Then blasts came, again and again, roaring one on top of the other, and under them, at intervals, the heavier thunder rolled. The house was shaking steadily and the windows rattling.

"Whut we gonna do?" Marie wailed. "Lincom gunboats heah."

"They're going to take you up North with the Yankees," Granny said.

"Ain't no Yankee go' take me nowhur. I'se whur I belongs."

Then they heard yells on the street and they all started talking at once.

"Maybe we'd better leave now."

"Where'd we go?"

"Let's wait and see —"

"I can't wait with Mamma here."

"I'll go out," Chester said, "and see how it looks."

"What can you tell from here? We ought to start packing."

"I know some men in the adjutant's office. They'll tell me."

"It'll take hours to get there and back with the streets crowded —"

"I'll get through them all right."

"We can start packing while he's gone."

"Elizabeth, you help Mamma."

"I'm going with Chester." She was surprised when she heard her own voice, clear but thin.

"You can't go out on those streets," her father cried. "Shells might fall any minute."

"She'd be safer there than in here. The walls will start falling in."

"Oh, Jesus!"

"I'll hurry," Chester said. "Mr. Kirby, you'd better guard your doors against marauders."

"You go on with him, Elizabeth," her mother said. "I'll tend to Mamma."

"You be careful then," her father called despairingly after her as she ran out of the room. Alone upstairs, she was scared as when she had been a little girl in a thunderstorm. The house trembled as though it were about to collapse. She grabbed up her hat and bag and ran down the stairs.

Chester was waiting at the bottom. He held a stained felt hat in his hand. He was staring up at her intently, with such a light in his eyes that all her movements were checked. She went the last few steps slowly, one foot moving after the other had stopped. When she reached the last step, his hand reached out to hers.

"Elizabeth, you look so scared, I—I want to make you feel safe. I want to make you feel safe all the time, to protect you . . ."

She was numbed by his words. It was the war in him talking, she told herself, but she could not look at him. Her gaze dropped to his hard-worn boots, neatly polished. She wanted to wrap her arms around his legs.

"Those little flowers on your hat," he said, "they look so helpless." She could n't bear it. "I reckon we all feel helpless now."

"If you would only depend on me—" his voice deepened and slowed, as though it were hard for him to speak—"then maybe you would n't feel so helpless."

She felt the tears well up. She tried not to cry. But the moisture burned her eyes and she saw his boots through a blur. Then her body shook.

"Elizabeth!" His hand touched her shoulder, slid away. "What's the matter? Is it something I've said?"

She shook her head. "It—it's just all so—awful." The tears poured then and she was sobbing. His arms closed around her and she felt the soft cloth of his jacket. A loose button hurt her shoulder.

"You're a little girl. Oh, my sweet little one, I love you so . . ."

"No, no, no! Don't talk like that. I—I can't stand it."

"But I could n't help telling you now, Elizabeth, seeing you so scared."

"But you must n't."

"Must n't love you?"

"Must n't anything. Not now!"

"I did n't mean to tell you now. I meant to wait until the war was over."

"The war will never be over."

"You're just upset now. This is enough to upset anybody. But try to believe me, Elizabeth. Even if these gunboats get close enough to shell the city, the Yanks have still got our army to fight through before they get to you. And they won't do it!"

His words quieted her. She fumbled for her handkerchief and wiped her eyes. He stepped back and his voice was gentler when he spoke, but the firm ring was still in it.

"I'll tell you again, Elizabeth, unless—" he paused and then his words jerked out—"unless there's somebody else."

She shook her head, drying her eyes.

"Then, if there is n't anyone else, I—" his voice rose, sounded

young and boyish again — "I feel as if I could save Richmond single-handed."

She saw his drawn face flush, and his eyes shone. She smiled up at him with all her love.

"We'd better go now," she said softly. "The family will be worried, and — and we've got to find out if they should leave."

He took her arm and they left the house. "I honestly don't think your family will have to leave their home. And I'm glad they're not running like these poor people."

The street was choked with buggies and carriages and wagons and carts and swarming mobs on foot. The bedlam of their shouts and screams rose above the distant thunder of the gunboats down the river. A gaunt-faced man in shabby clothes stood up in a buggy and lashed at a rearing horse. People, staggering under bundles, scattered before him. An old woman, with her bonnet awry, pulled a little girl back toward the curb. An open carriage cut around the buggy. The old lady screamed. The negro coachman swerved the horses onto the sidewalk.

The carriage crashed against a lamppost. The glass in the globe flew over the milling crowd. Chairs and table legs waved in the carriage. A box tumbled into the street. A horse stumbled over it.

"That's my wedding dress, my wedding dress . . ."

The driver turned the horses back into the street. The carriage plunged ahead, careening off the lamppost.

". . . my wedding dress, my wedding . . ."

Chester pulled Elizabeth through the mob and turned into Franklin Street. The thunder rolled louder and throbbed through her.

"You leavin'? You leavin'?" a pale young woman on the balcony of a yellow brick Georgian house was chanting to the street.

An old man leaning on a gold-headed evening cane and clutching a handbag yelled back at her: "Only a fool would stay."

A closed brougham skittered against the curb and Chester pulled Elizabeth back. Cardboard boxes split inside and paper spilled like snow.

"Chester," Elizabeth cried, "they look like government records. That looks like they really are moving the government. Maybe we should go back home and —"

"That's just rumor about the government leaving."

"But Congress did adjourn and the President sent his family away —"

"Wait 'll we find out from these officers in the adjutant's office."

"But it might be too late. The shells might fall any minute, and the family —"

"Richmond won't fall without a battle, Elizabeth. And I'll look after you and your family."

"But . . . but . . ." She discovered she had nothing to say, nothing to express except her own rising terror. The maddened rush of the crowd, all moving the other way, infected her. She felt that she would have to scream her own paralyzing fear, admit her own cowardice, anything to get away.

"Look at the people on the Capitol," Chester said.

Dots moved on top of the building. The square swarmed with people, but they were n't running away.

"Trying to see with spyglasses," Chester said. "They can't have passed the fort yet, and we're almost at the War Office now."

She could not answer. She was led down Ninth Street. Below St. Paul's Church, three dirty soldiers lounged on the porch of a deserted house.

"Stragglers," Chester said scornfully.

Then she saw a solid mass packed in front of Mechanics' Hall.

"We'll never get through," she said, trying to hold back.

"Stay behind me." He moved to the side of the building and she took hold of his worn leather belt. He touched men on the shoulder. "Pardon me," he said quietly. They looked at the thin, determined face, the burning eyes, the battle-stained uniform with the pointed chevrons, and they looked at the yellow stripe of the cavalry. They moved. At the doorway, Chester encircled her with his left arm and pulled her through the surging mob. They were inside the hall.

They pressed down the wide hall to the last door on the left. There the crowd thickened again. The hall was stifling hot and cloudy with cigar smoke. Chester moved to the edge of the pack around the doorway. A gray-bearded man in a dusty uniform stood in front of them, on the edge of the crowd. Juice of a forgotten cud trickled through the thick hair.

"You can't get through into the War Office, son," he said.

"I've got to get news, colonel. This young lady's family don't know whether to leave town or not."

"You'll find out right here. They don't know anything in there except that thus far they've held the gunboats."

"They have?"

"Yes, sir, and done considerable damage to the *Galena*."

"Hear that, Elizabeth?" He turned, smiling, to her.

She nodded. Nausea swelled up from the heat and smoke and the thick air of the stifling mob. She saw a stout, sweating man pushing out from the office. Graying hair was plastered on his forehead.

"There's Uncle Virginius," Elizabeth pointed weakly. "Maybe he'll know something, and then — then we can go."

"Mr. Kirby! Mr. Kirby!"

Tired eyes briefly lit. He strained through to the edge of the crowd where they stood.

"How are you, young man? Elizabeth, this is no place for you."

"We had to find out, Uncle Virginius. Mother and Father don't know whether to leave or not."

"Well, I don't think you'll have to leave to-day."

"You mean they're driving them back?" Chester shouted.

"I mean we're holding our own."

"But what's happening?"

"That's all I know." He passed a shaking hand over his eyes. "Now you'll have to excuse me. I promised my friend St. George Paxton I would tell him when his wife should leave the city."

"And you're not telling her to leave to-day?"

"I told you, I did n't think the city would fall to-day." He moved off.

From deep inside the office rose a long-drawn, dry sigh. In the doorway everyone stiffened. The sigh whispered back to them. It was like a moaning wind. Then the press inside the doorway suddenly split into tumbling fragments. They surged backward. Elizabeth glimpsed them like a torrent rushing toward her. Through a haze she saw a tide of pale, greasy, twisted, muttering faces looming over her. She was being engulfed by them.

"We're saved! We're saved! Richmond's saved! We've driven the gunboats back!"

Maddened steps, like galloping hoofs, thundered down the hall and the moan rose with them and swept out into the street and broke.

"We're saved! We're saved! We've driven the gunboats back . . ."

"The fools," a harsh voice said. "McClellan's army is just outside the city. The siege has just started."

"But we'll drive them back too, colonel." That was Chester's voice, far away. Then she saw his face over her, dim and blurred. "After what you told me to-day, Elizabeth, I feel like I could drive them back myself."

His words faded farther and farther. She was falling. A hot fog closed over her. She was lighter than air and in the fog she rested against something round and firm, like a log. *He would drive them back. . . . How sad he was so young against all those people. . . . How sad they all were. . . .*

CHAPTER XI

“Also what impression have you as to intrenched works for you to contend with in front of Richmond? Can you get near enough to throw shells into the city?” — *President Lincoln’s telegram to Major General McClellan before the battle of Seven Pines, May 31–June 1, 1862*

Dennis stood alone in the Amblers’ reception hall when Mildred came down the stairs. Involuntarily she slowed as she saw him standing, rigid, with his left hand clenched. Bitter shame was written in his face, pinched and pallid from those months, February through April, in the prison hospital. Home now a month, he never forgot, never let anyone forget, that empty right sleeve which ended in his pocket. To him it was like an emasculation. It deprived him of his driving strength, and he had nothing else.

Then he saw her. His face did not change. He walked stiffly to the bottom of the stairs. Music drifted from the drawing-room, and laughing voices. She could n’t let him go in there, looking like that.

“Dennis,” she said quietly, “why do you come to these parties if they make you so miserable?”

“I come to be with you.”

“I must say it does n’t seem to make you any happier.”

“I’d be more unhappy if I were n’t,” he said stubbornly.

“But you can’t go on like this, as though your life were ruined.”

“It is ruined. What is left for a man like me?”

“Oh, everything!” She made herself calmer, spoke more quietly. “Dennis. You should n’t think of your injury like that. To other people you’re a man who’s made a great sacrifice for his country, for them. It’s something for you to be proud of.”

"How can I be proud of myself when there's an army five miles outside of Richmond, waiting to attack the city, and I'm here helpless? All those soldiers in there will ride back to camp at midnight and to-morrow they'll fight to break this siege. What will I do? I'll skulk back to a hotel room and stay there by myself. I'll be here like the women and children and old men. If the city falls, I can't do a thing to defend a soul — not even you."

"But you must n't feel that," she said with genuine sympathy, the first time she had ever been moved by him. "New Orleans has fallen, and Norfolk and other places, but those people have to go on living. If Richmond does fall, our lives will go on — somehow."

"Not mine." His voice was harsh. "My life will never be the same again."

"None of ours will ever be the same, Dennis. The war has changed us all, in different ways. But you're not helpless just because you can't help defend the city. There's plenty —"

"There's not you, Mildred," he cut in. "That's where I'm helpless. That's where it hurts most, this — this being half a man."

That she could not answer. If only she had, to give to Dennis, what she could n't give to Brose Kirby. From the drawing-room, voices floated on the sad strains of a waltz:—

"Weeping, sad and lonely,
Hopes and fears how vain!
Yet praying when this cruel war is over,
Praying that we meet again . . ."

"Shall we go in?" she said wearily.

Without a word, he stood aside for her. When they entered the room she felt him stiffen. He had never been at home among dandies. Before he lost his arm he had looked with contempt on their city elegance and drawing-room accomplishments. But now their uniforms were faded with dust and rain and battle smoke, their collars were studded with hard-won bars of rank, and Dennis knew that these were the men who stood between Richmond and McClellan, and who at midnight, when he walked the rainy streets

to his hotel room, would be riding back to the camp along the Chickahominy.

Then she did feel pity for him. These dandies had the color, the elegance, that had never touched him; and now, in the crisis, they had manhood too. There were men from the "Bloody First" (Brose's own battered regiment), now in Kemper's brigade, since A. P. Hill had a division. There was young Chester Cary, of Stuart's cavalry brigade, wounded at Williamsburg. ("Manassas was a child's game compared to that," he had said.) There was a scarred lieutenant of the Richmond Howitzers, on whose iron-seated caissons Brose's young brother rode. There was a black-bearded artilleryman from New Orleans' famed Washington Battalion, and there was the blond-bearded Hood of Texas. There were a wind-bronzed captain of the Richmond Grays and a pink-cheeked boy of the Richmond Fayette Artillery whose eyes were already old. All, all dancing to-night as Dennis could never dance, laughing as he could never laugh, and knowing that to-morrow the bullets of McClellan's Yanks would be reaching for them.

Mrs. Ambler came toward them in another of her dresses that had run the blockade. The point lace was new. Mildred was quickly conscious of her own, last year's, with a lace collar reworked from an old shawl. And the flounces were silk from an old dress which she and Edmonia had dyed to match. But Mrs. Ambler pretended to think the whole creation new. Then she turned to Dennis and said:—

"You're the noblest-looking man here, Lieutenant Leatherbury. I'm proud to have one of the gallant soldiers of Roanoke Island in my home. Won't you tell me about it sometime? None of the other survivors will."

"You must remember, Mrs. Ambler, that in the Blues most of us had been friends all our lives. In that trap we saw boys we used to play with slaughtered. We never had a chance. Those of us who did escape—cheated death."

There was a short silence. Then Mrs. Ambler said vehemently:—
"I hope our boys make them pay for it to-morrow!"

"Are they sure they fight to-morrow?" Dennis asked quickly.

"That's what they all say. Johnston is at last going to attack now that the Yankees are at our gates."

Willie Kennard came up then. On his sleeve shone a new *galon* for a major. Mildred remembered writing in her girl's diary how handsome he had looked in a Norfolk reefing jacket and immense trousers that tapered at the ankle. He had worn the fashionable Dundreary whiskers then. Now he wore a close-cropped beard. She remembered him as a great dancing man; now all you heard of him was that he was one of the most promising young officers of Richmond.

"For auld lang syne," he said, "will you give the first dance to me — if the lieutenant is n't dancing?"

Dennis bowed shortly. "I never dance."

"Lieutenant Leatherbury is going to talk to me," Mrs. Ambler said.

Willie's arm touched her lightly and she glided out on the floor. It was as smooth as glass. Willie had not lost his touch. It would have been a release had not Dennis stood beside Mrs. Ambler, his face wooden, and watched her every move. Now that he considered himself helpless, he claimed her as he never had before.

As she danced with Willie, then with General Hood, then with Burton Harrison, the President's secretary, and then with Chester Cary, Dennis's eyes never left her. He was like a grim guardian over her very thoughts. He seemed to suspect every word the men said to her. They talked only of the siege and their attack to-morrow.

". . . We hit McClellan's left wing to-morrow. . . . You see, he's split across the Chickahominy. . . . His left comes down across the Williamsburg Road. That wing's about the size of our whole army. We've got to get him while he's divided. . . . He can't bring his right across because the rains have swollen the river and the swamp. . . . He crossed the Chickahominy with his right wing, up by Mechanicsville Pike, so he could meet McDowell coming down from Washington. But McDowell's held at Washington by

Jackson's victories in the Valley. . . . Your father's there with Jackson, is n't he? That little army is the only one having luck. . . . We'll try to help Joe Johnston have some to-morrow. . . ."

Chester talked less of war than the others. Mildred was surprised at the boy's change. He had matured since that afternoon, a year ago, when he was in her house with Brose. He had been an eager boy then, with excitement in his voice. Now he was as subdued as an older man, almost stern. And his eyes burned like a zealot's. He had always been a serious boy. She tried to draw him out of himself.

"I reckon you'll be an officer soon, Chester, now that you've got your sergeant's chevrons."

"I hope." No quick smile came. "I think I'm going to be made a scout. I know this ground around here."

"That would be exciting!"

"I hope it will be beneficial to the army." He was very grave. "We've really got to get them away from Richmond. This city can't stand a siege."

He danced her toward the fringe of the guests. He seemed intent on his dancing, and this was strange, for even when he was a student he had been an indifferent dancer. They moved in front of the open French doors. Outside, the rain lashed and she felt the raw wind.

"You poor boys have to ride back in that?" She looked through the doors at the torrent slanting down.

"Let's step outside and see how it looks!" He spoke very quickly, in sudden excitement.

Mildred knew he was not a man for flirtations. And she remembered the way he had looked at Elizabeth Kirby. Curious, she passed with him through the open doors. The rain drove in from one end of the porch. The farther end was dry, except for a slight mist blown by the wind. They moved toward that end. The music sounded faint inside, an overtone to the driving rain. Toward the edge, she could see above the roof and there was nothing but blackness. She was wondering what Chester wanted to see when

a dark shadow moved out from behind the column in front of her.

Strength drained from her when she saw him. His hat was off and rain glistened in his loosened hair. He moved toward her, easily, and against the night sky she saw his shoulders blocked out. They looked bare with the wet shirt plastered to his skin. He held a slouch hat in one hand. Little streams trickled off it. When he stood in front of her his dark wet face was like a swooping hawk's. She took one backward step. His hand closed over hers. Her body went limp in his arms. She felt his cool damp face on hers and her mouth reached for his.

"Oh, Brose," she murmured, "why did you come? Why? Why?"

"To-morrow. You know we attack. I had to see you."

"You should n't. You should n't do this to me. I told you we could n't —"

"I know you told me, but I can't live in hell all the time."

"I don't believe you. It could n't mean so much. It's just that you want me."

"Sure I want you. But that is n't anywhere near all of it. Christ, you've wanted to see me! You ought to know what it's like."

"I know too much of what it's like. I want to forget it, I tell you. I don't want to be reminded."

"How can you forget something that's in your vitals all the time? Waiting out there in those mosquito-ridden thickets, with you here where the city might fall in ruins, what else is there any more?"

"But that's it! It's because you're out there in the army, with all your life cut away, that you think —"

"It's because I love you."

"No!" Her voice was like a cry of pain. "Oh, why did you have to say that? You know I saw you Secession Night with that girl. You know my father has told me about your life. I know how you've lived, what you've been. You can't change."

"You don't know anything about me. Our past lives are all gone. It does n't make any difference that this war made us what we are now. We are it. That's what brought us together. We

have n't got any old lives to fit to one another. We've got now, just what we are to-day."

"We've got to-morrow, Brose. We've got to go on living!"

He pulled her roughly to him. His arms held her cruelly. "You know I'll never come to you again."

"I know. Brose, you're hurting me."

"I want to hurt you."

"Mildred!"

She had forgotten Chester. Brose's arms loosened and she turned. Chester was standing by the doorway.

"Here comes Dennis. The party's about to break up."

Brose stepped back from her. His tumbled hair glistened. His dark wet face was blurred in the shadows. Only his eyes glowed.

"Please go now, Brose."

"And leave you for him? You'll go to him now—in pity. You'll go to him for safety, for your to-morrows."

"Brose, in God's name, please go."

"I'll go, and this time—good-bye."

"Mildred!" Chester was right behind her.

She watched Brose back into the shadows. He was swallowed up. Chester stepped beside her. She heard the splash as Brose struck the muddy ground of the garden. Below, on Main Street, she heard the muffled beat of a drum. More men moving up, men without to-morrows.

"Mildred?"

She turned slowly. Her eyes burned with unshed tears. Dennis bulked in the doorway.

"What's the matter?" He started toward them.

"It was hot in there," she said. She took Chester's arm and they walked to meet Dennis.

He peered at her closely. She could n't raise her eyes. The three of them moved into the doorway. There she stood rigid. Inside, the soldiers were leaving, and they were leaving girls who told them good-bye, girls who were waiting for them after to-morrow. The music came clear and sweet and haunting.

Good night, ladies . . .

The soldiers in the room lifted their strong voices. They moved singing toward the door. The girls moved beside them, holding them close. Why did she have to be alone, beside Dennis, when the one for whom she had a good-bye kiss had left in the darkness, without even a good-bye. . . .

Good night, sweet ladies . . .

The soldiers were at the arched doorway leading into the hall. The girls embraced them. The older men shook hands. Outside, alone in the black rain, Brose was tramping back to the Chickahominy. The drums rolled for him.

We've got to leave you now . . .

They passed through the arched doorway toward the front door. Their voices grew fainter. The girls' voices were thrown after them, caught up in the lashing rain. The last soldier left the room. The ladies and old men stood in a tight bunch, waving, waving, and calling.

Merrily we roll along, good-bye, good-bye, good-bye . . .

Dimly the soldiers' voices drifted back.

Roll along, roll along . . .

Dimly the distant drum, muffled in the rain, beat on Main Street hill, beat for him, walking alone, without a good-bye, without a to-morrow.

Merrily we roll along, good-bye, good-bye, good-bye. . . .

When dusk closed down, the thunder receded and they heard a muffled rattle.

"Them's muskets," John said.

Mildred looked at her mother. She had n't spoken for a long time. Mildred had no conception of how long. Time had lost meaning. The cannonade had started in the middle of the afternoon. They had been finishing midday dinner. Mildred had not been drinking coffee. Her mother had a *demi-tasse* of thin brown coffee-flavored water. She couldn't give up coffee; she

could n't afford to use much. Mrs. Wade had been raising the cup to her mouth when the first peal came. Her body grew rigid. With the cup poised, she looked as though she might have been sitting for a portrait. Then the thunder had come rolling. She had lowered the cup. Without a word she moved out on the balcony. Mildred followed.

Since then they had sat there, silent. Edmonia and Delphy and John joined them. The sky hung low and dripping. The air was close. There was no change to indicate time. There was nothing but the ceaseless rolling of the harsh thunder. Sometimes it lulled, like a distant roar. Sometimes it swept higher, like a furious wind. But it never stopped. It might have been an hour. It might have been forever. Everything else was gone from life. Memory faded from the beginning of the cannonade and stretched back endlessly, a memory of dull thunder rolling through murky heat, of a gray sky dripping on the garden.

Dusk came like a slow-falling curtain. The murk deepened until there was nothing but a dusky, hot blackness. Then lights gleamed below on Main Street. The thunder grew intermittent and distant. They barely heard it now, in sullen growls. The rattle grew fitful. It came in spiteful bursts.

Suddenly there was a low rumble on Main Street. The five figures stirred. John stood up. They all looked at Mrs. Wade. She was leaning forward and in the darkness Mildred saw the pallor of her face. The rumble came nearer. Over it rose voices in a deepening murmur. Then came a high shout. Edmonia groaned.

"They done took the city, Miz Isobel."

"Keep quiet, Mamma," John said.

"Whut thet then, John?" Delphy was huddled against one of the columns.

"I don' know. Lissen. Gettin' louder."

It was clearer now. It was the rumble of many wagons over the cobblestones. They could hear the clank of the horses' shoes. The droning murmur was a moan. It sounded like a thousand men groaning together. Shouts clamored steadily now.

"They done took the city," Edmonia wailed. "I knowed they —"

"Shut up, Mamma," John said. "Thet's a newsboy. He's yellin' extry."

"All of them are not newsboys," Mrs. Wade said. She arose quietly and walked to the edge of the balcony. Mildred moved beside her mother. Her calm was almost hysterical. Across the slice of Main Street which they could glimpse, a wagon moved slowly. The moans rose high.

"It's the wounded," Mrs. Wade said in a dead monotone.

"We done lost then," Edmonia said. "Yankees done kilt them all."

"They would n't be coming back to Richmond if they'd lost . . . John!"

"Yes'm."

"Get Maggie to take all the coffee we have left and make a big pail of it. Have we any ice?"

"Yes'm, we got a little. But Maggie ain't here."

Mrs. Wade made no movement. She stared straight ahead, over the darkened garden to where wagons moved along Main Street. Her profile had the white stillness of a corpse.

"Where is Maggie?"

"She gone with Josiah. Say Yankees come foh to free 'em. They goin' to the Yankees."

Mildred could hear Edmonia and Delphy draw in their breath and wait.

"Did Sam and Felissy go too?"

John was silent. It was Delphy's voice that came quavering.

"You gotta fohgive them, Miz Isobel. They don' know whut they doin'. They b'lieve everything Josiah and Maggie tells 'em. That Josiah got 'em fixed same like he put a spell on 'em. I swear foh Gawd, Miz Isobel, they don' mean nothin' wrong."

"Where are they?"

"I don' know, ma'am," John said.

Mrs. Wade waited a moment. The groans below welled up

louder. The line of wagons rumbled steadily across the slice of street. A shrill voice pierced the others.

"Extry! Extry! Yankees driven back from Seven Pines. Ten thousand killed."

"Edmonia, you make the coffee, and, Delphy, you make a pail of ice water."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Yes 'm, Miz Isobel."

They scrambled up, went shuffling inside the house. In a second they heard Delphy's voice out of the shadows. "John. You light sump'n in heah. Them niggus mout a come back heah."

"Excuse me, Miz Isobel," John said. "I forgot to put on the lights."

"John. Look the house over from top to bottom. And when you come back, bring me Mr. Dinwiddie's dueling pistols. Load them."

Mildred was getting afraid for her mother. "You don't think they'd try to harm us, do you, Mother?"

"They've gotten liquor. That Josiah is a bad negro."

"But John'll be here."

"No. John's going to take the coffee and water down to those wounded. You go with him and help those poor men."

"But we can't leave you here alone."

"You do as I say this time, Mildred. Your father's in a strange country, just like these men are. I'd like to feel that some other woman would put his life before her own fears."

The heavy moan of many men grew and deepened, reaching up toward them on the porch.

"They sound like they're beseeching us," Isobel Wade said. "Oh, dear God, what have our people done to deserve this?"

"Extry! Extry! Yankees driven back from Seven Pines. Fifteen thousand killed. Half of First Vuhginia Regiment killed!"

"No . . ."

Her mother turned, looked full at Mildred with her dead eyes.

"Is that Mr. Kirby's regiment?"

Mildred nodded. She could n't get her breath. She felt as if her heart were not beating. Inside, all life had stopped.

"Sit down, Mildred," her mother said. "You look about to faint."

Mildred shook her head. "I—I'll hurry up John." She backed toward the doors.

Her mother followed. "You've seen him?"

"Yes. Yes, I saw him last night. He came to the dance where I was, stood outside in the rain, like a criminal. He came to see me because he knew he was going into the battle to-day. And I told him to go away . . . I did n't even tell him good-bye."

"Extry! Extry! Yankees driven back two miles. Twenty thousand killed. First Vuhginia Regiment nearly wiped out. Captain Norton, Company D, killed!"

Mildred stumbled through the French doors. The dining room was black and sticky. She brushed against a chair and clung to the table for support. A dark shadow blocked out against the French windows.

"Mildred. You're not to go down there looking for him."

"Company D is *his*!"

"Mildred. I'll have you locked in the house before I'll let you go down there looking for that man."

"You can't! You hear? You can't. I promised Father that as long as he lived I would n't see Brose Kirby. And I won't break that promise. I would n't break it last night. I let him go to that battle without a good-bye. But nothing in the world can stop me from finding out if he's alive or dead."

John stood in the hall doorway, holding a taper above his head. His black face glistened with sweat. His eyes shifted from one to the other. He held the closed pistol case under his arm. There was a long silence. Then Mrs. Wade said:—

"We won't need a light in here, John. Did you go over the house?"

"Yes'm."

"Then leave the pistols in my sitting room upstairs. I'll sit at the head of the stairs. I want you to go with Miss Mildred down to Main Street. She's going to help the wounded soldiers. You carry the coffee and water when Edmonia gets them ready."

The thin light of the taper vanished. In the hot blackness Mildred could no longer see her mother. She had moved away from the window.

Mildred felt for the door to the pantry, opened it from behind.

"I'm going now, Mother," she said.

Her mother made no answer. Mildred felt her way through the musty pantry and went into the kitchen. The two negro women jumped, stared at her.

"What's mattuh with you, Miss Mildred?"

"You look same like a ghost standin' theah."

"Have you got the coffee and water ready?"

"Just 'bout."

"All right. Give them to John. I'll wait out on the portico. We'll go out through the back."

Outside the moan swelled and rolled in like a sullen surf. The groans of the men and the rumble of the wagons were indistinguishable. It was all one sound, the whole city wailing. She heard faintly, back on Broad Street, the tolling of the bell in the Virginia Central Depot. More soldiers arriving. More men to be thrown against the army lusting for the city. More men to come moaning through their city's streets. And how long would it last? How long before the foreign men would come marching in behind the wounded?

"I'm ready, Miss Mildred." John stood with a pail in each hand.

She went down the steps to the garden, and to the gravel walk along the brick slave houses. There were no lights in them to-night.

"Where are Edmonia and Delphy?"

"They sittin' at the head of the stairs with Miz Isobel. I don't know what to make of Miz Isobel. She look so funny, sittin' theah with a pistol in each hand. Nevuh sayin' a word."

They passed out through the wooden gate between the quarters and the stable. People were hurrying down the hill. Their faces were awful to see. They had heard the news too. The First Virginia Regiment was composed largely of Richmond men. They were the men who had laughed and sung on these same streets that night last spring. Brose had been one of them, in a high-buttoned brown coat, his face dark in the glare of torches. She remembered him in his new uniform that afternoon, with the braided collar and the soft gray cloth of his jacket. She remembered him in the winter, with the buttons shining on the cape of his overcoat and a cadet cap shading his eyes. And she remembered him last night, with a wet gray shirt plastered to his shoulders and a slouch hat dripping water. He had marched alone to the roll of drums. There were no drums needed for these men now.

The first ones she saw lay on the bottom of a springless wagon. She had not known that human beings could be so dirty. Then she saw that their faces were black. It was gunpowder, burnt in. Their clothes were filthy. Patches hung loose and long rents exposed the flesh. Plastered to them was mud, wet and oozing. Trickling through the mud was blood. They groaned when they rolled. There was no straw in the wagon. A man at the edge pitched over and she saw the dark red fluid matted against his chest. Flies buzzed over it.

The wagon started to sway. The whole street was swaying. The groans receded. Something cold struck her face and she fell against a thick bar.

"Miss Mildred! Miss Mildred!"

She was leaning against John's arm and he was splashing water in her face. The ground steadied. The groans swelled loud again. She heard the voices about her, crying out. *Where is he, where is he, where . . .* A heavier rumble rolled toward them. Mildred slowly straightened.

"Don' look now, Miss Mildred."

She pushed away from him. A coal cart rumbled past. The arms and legs tumbled together were stiff. Out of the back a head

hung down. The mouth dropped open. Above the mouth there was a blackened red hole. Flies . . .

"Give me some water, John." She closed her eyes.

"Heah you are, Miss Mildred. Maybe we bettuh go back."

She shook her head, sipped the cool water. Another wagon rumbled past. She looked over the cup. The bloody, muddy uniforms had been gray. She had seen others like them, when they were new and white pipe-clay belts crossed the chest with a brass buckle shining. She moved toward the wagon. Her legs were shaking.

"Driver! Driver . . . First Virginia . . ."

"No'm. Fo'ty-first."

Water . . . water . . . water . . .

She had the cup in her hand. She held it to John. He spilled the water in pouring. She moved to the back of the wagon. The man was old. His beard was matted. She passed him the cup. He splashed it over him gulping it down.

Water . . . water . . .

She took the cup from his shaking hands and passed it to a young man. His face was green. He shook his head and raised his arm. It was red soaked. She leaned on the side of the wagon, held it to his lips. He sipped. The wagon rocked over the cobblestones. "*Oh, God!*"

A driver bawled. Muddy horses were on her. She stepped aside and the van slowed for her. The nearest man smiled. He was young, too. He had a brown moustache. There was a single bar on his collar. John filled the cup and she held it to him.

"Where are the men from the First Virginia?"

He shook his head. "Thank you, ma'am."

A buggy pulled out of her way. A soldier was propped up against an older man. The soldier's head fell on the older man's shoulder. Blood drained on the velvet collar.

Where is he, where is he, where . . .

A cart rumbled heavily. A stiff arm pointed out of the still bodies, pointed straight upward to the night sky.

Water . . .

A mud-caked man limped on his musket. John steadied him. Mildred held the cup to his mouth. He gulped it down, spat, gulped again.

"Where are the men of the First Virginia?"

"Don' know, lady. Plenty still comin' in, though."

She and John moved along the wagons and vans, the carts and carriages.

"Where are the men of the First Virginia?"

Nobody knew. They knew everything else. "General Huger did n't come up in time . . . could've slaughtered 'em if he had. . . . General Johnston wounded . . . We only drove 'em back a mile. . . . First Vuhginia? Cut up bad. Don' know where they're at. . . . We took some guns, but battle did n't do us no good . . . could've been a massa-cree if Huger come up. . . . Reckon we lost five thousand men. . . . Retreatin' Joe Johnston got shot. . . . First Vuhginia with Longstreet? They 'tacked across an open field. No'm. Don't know where they at now. . . . Huger . . . Johnston . . . Longstreet . . . First Vuhginia mowed down on an open field . . ."

The line of wagons was thinning out. The coffee and water were gone. Mildred stood there. The people swirled around her, looking, calling, looking.

Where is my boy . . . where is he . . . where . . .

The next wagon had Alabama troops.

"We might try the hospitals, Miss Mildred," John said.

They could hardly get in for the people rushing in, wild-eyed, stumbling out, unseeing. Surgeons' sleeves were rolled up above dripping red arms. The blood glistened in the lamplight. Stewards and quartermasters swarmed in intercircling lines, like scurrying ants. Their red hands carried bandages and medicines. They were the bandages the women had made. The beds were

filled. They were putting men on the floor. The groans were a low undertone to the voices.

"More hospitals . . . stores . . . warehouses . . . *water, water* . . . homes . . . more beds . . . *where is he* . . ."

John moved close beside her as she pushed among the beds, looked over the men on the floor.

"Where are the men of the First Virginia?"

They pressed out through the crowd. The wagons were coming irregularly. A negro coachman was sobbing on the box of a carriage. Inside, two women held a dead soldier between them. A stiff arm fell across a woman's lap. In the street light a new major's *galon* gleamed on the sleeve. Last night that arm had been around her waist. Willie Kennard would dance no more.

People packed outside the wholesale drygoods store of Kent, Paine. Mildred shoved through them to the inside. Bolts of cloth were stretched on the floor. Soldiers were laid on them. Surgeons staggered with bloodshot eyes. Groans murmured under the voices. Quartermasters dripped mud and blood on the pallets they laid.

"Where are the men of the First Virginia?"

Outside the groans were dying. It was the calling voices that wailed. The rumble of wagons was thin. A dead cart passed under a street lamp. Flies swarmed over it. A crowd was forming in front of Keen, Baldwin's, the wholesalers.

"Turnin' everything into hospitals," John said.

Mildred pushed through the new crowds. Their voices rose in a high long sigh. At the doorway a young girl moved out supporting a drooping soldier. A dark older woman helped him from the other side. The soldier's head was sagging. In the dim light the girl's face suddenly took form. Mildred pushed toward her.

"Miss Kirby," she cried.

The girl turned slowly. Her face was wet white. Her eyes stared, and she focused slowly, like a person waking out of a dream. The

soldier lifted his head. It was Paul, the sixteen-year-old brother. His face was drawn tight. His lips were gray. His eyes were an old man's. But they steadied on her and the mouth parted in a ghastly smile.

"Brose — all right — they attacked over an open field — but — Brose — all right . . ."

"Thank God."

"Brose is all right, Miss Wade," Elizabeth said then. She sounded as if she talked in her sleep.

"So you're Miss Wade." The older woman was staring at her out of burning black eyes.

A chill touched Mildred. She nodded. The woman's face was as dark as his. Her mouth was a cruel line.

"Come on — Mother . . ." Paul's head drooped again.

Mildred spun around. She moved through the crowd. She saw nothing, heard nothing. The woman hated her.

"Mildred!"

She turned slowly. It was old Mr. Paxton. He was gray. His hat was off and the dye in his hair streaked down on his forehead and neck. The high, winged collar drooped over his coat. He touched John's arm, rested himself.

"Mildred. I'm helping out with the Medical Department. Terrible situation here. Not enough beds, nurses, nothing. Could you and your mother offer a few rooms?"

"Yes, sir. Only too gladly. We're good for ten."

"Thank you —"

"Please, don't thank me. I'll have the house ready."

"I'll send them right up. It won't be for long." He turned back down Main Street hill.

Mildred moved on. The wails hung over all the city. The groans murmured on inside her. John swung the empty pails. He was panting. They turned up toward the house. People still moved down the street with those wide eyes, those moving lips. *Where is he . . . where is he . . .* A boy ran toward them, yelling. He was waving slips of yellow Confederate newspaper.

"Extry! Extry! Five thousand Confederates killed and wounded!"

They turned in through the back gate. The quarters were still dark. John unlocked the kitchen door. The lights burned low. They walked through the silent house into the hall.

"Mildred!" It was her mother's voice.

"Yes, Mother. Did they come back?"

"Yes. I sent them away. All of them."

Mildred heard John draw in his breath. His nephew and niece were gone. He knew it meant for good.

"I told them if they wanted to be free—they were. Josiah said he was coming back."

"He bettuh not," John said.

"I told Mr. Paxton they could send ten wounded soldiers here," Mildred said. "They're short of hospitals."

"Thank God we can help them. John, is there any of Mr. Dinwiddie's brandy left?"

"One bottle, Miz Isobel."

"Get that out and use up our tea. Edmonia and Delphy, you get busy."

Mildred heard them scuffling upstairs. John moved silently back into the pantry. Mildred looked at the sofa against the wall. She was aware all at once that her whole body ached. She stepped toward the sofa, then stopped. If she sat down, she would not rise again this night. There was a clatter of horses' shoes on the flagstone and the rumble of a wagon coming into the drive. She thought of the blood and mud that would enter the house. And she thought of Brose, lying in the hard bottom of a springless wagon, moving toward a stranger's house in a strange town. She walked stiffly down the hall and threw open the front door. The wagon had stopped. The low groans hummed in the hot night.

At last the house was quiet. The wounded men had been more wakeful than on any night since they had come, two weeks before.

They could n't stop talking of Jeb Stuart's ride around McClellan. "That little cavalry rode around the whole Yankee army . . . only one man lost. . . . See that plume on Stuart's hat? . . . Wa'n't he sump'n? . . . They might have the navy, but we got the cavalry. . . ."

Mildred had heard little of Jeb Stuart before. Turner Ashby was the name that had conjured. Ashby had been the famous cross-country rider of whom Dennis was forever speaking; then he had become the cavalry leader who made legends with Jackson's Valley army and of whom her father was always writing.

Her father's letters had changed since the Valley campaign. No more was he one of Richmond's Company F, trudging on bootless marches in a strange country, sleeping wet and dreaming of his home, pulling caissons through muddy ruts, suffering the cold that whistled through the mountain passes. Now he was "one of Jackson's men."

"So long as a man of us lives," he had written, "he will not forget the Valley Pike this spring. The air is as sweet as wine. . . . We have played tag with the three armies of Banks, Frémont and Shields, and we have routed each in detail. . . . The green rolling hills are beautiful. We have plenty of forage. . . . We have driven the three armies from the Valley and McDowell huddles close to Washington, afraid of our attack. . . . Last night we danced in Winchester. The people were so happy to see us. . . ." And through all his letters had run the name of Turner Ashby — Ashby on his milk-white horse, Ashby the last man to retreat on a rear-guard action, Ashby with lifted sabre and his charmed life. Too soon his charmed life had ended, ended in a rear-guard action, ended with "Charge, men, for God's sake, charge." There was only the legend left. "We will never see his like again."

And now it was Jeb Stuart. The city had been singing when his column rode swinging past that afternoon. Mildred had leaned out of the window with several of the wounded soldiers. They had pointed out the lean, blond Farley, the volunteer aide; the beautiful, slender boy Pelham of the horse artillery; the massive Prussian,

Heros von Borcke, with the great sword; the giant Rooney Lee, son of the new general of the army.

Then she had seen a big man laughing. Suddenly the cheering swelled. The soldiers beside her started yelling in their weak voices. A plume waved on his roll-brimmed hat. The sun played in his flowing beard and on his yellow sash. A doeskin gauntlet flashed as he saluted the crowd. Then she heard his golden voice and saw his eyes, blue and shining.

"So that's Jeb Stuart. No wonder Chester loves him."

The wounded men would talk of nothing else. It was late before they were quieted and the house was silent.

Mildred sat at the window of her room, overlooking the shadowed garden. In the distance she saw the glow of the campfires of McClellan's army. Not a breath of air stirred. The faint fragrance of the flowers and the linden blossoms mingled with the smell of sweat and antiseptics, of sick flesh and medicines. A wagon rumbled over the canal bridge and a muffled drum rolled the death march. Another night funeral. Then from Franklin Street rang out the harsh voice of one of Winder's military policemen. "Halt! Who goes there?"

Suddenly she remembered sitting at this window as a little girl, looking down over the darkened city, and from Franklin Street she heard the night watchman's soft call: "All's well." Those words, in those lost days, had evoked all the peace and security of their lives in the city, seemed to suggest all the magic of the city's life which she would know when she grew up.

All's well. . . . The words echoed in her memory. Was there a person in Richmond with whom all was well? She wondered what shadowed streets Brose walked to-night, how his dark passion was spent. He was in Richmond, she knew, with the remnants of his shattered regiment, helping recruit and reorganize. She had heard of all that, heard that new recruits were hard to come by for the luckless "Bloody First." But they were soon to rejoin those men who slept to-night in the malarial thickets of the Chickahominy, who slept between the beleaguered city and the tightening ring of

McClellan's army. Nothing could be well for a man returning to those long watches in the swamp, with his besieged city at his back. Nothing could be well for a woman who loved a man of that suffering army. Nothing would ever be well again for those who slept in Richmond on this hot June night, and waited for — what?

June - July, 1862

CHAPTER XII

"Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern states that by the accession of a Republican administration, their property and peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension . . . and we denounce the lawless invasion by armed forces of the soil of any state . . . as among the gravest of crimes. . . ."—*President Lincoln, quoted by President Davis to the Confederate Congress*

Five miles northeast of Richmond the crossroads town of Mechanicsville lay deserted by its inhabitants. Empty window sockets exposed the desolated rooms behind smouldering walls. Among the ruins, honeysuckle and woodbine climbed the porch trellis of the one house that stood untouched in the swirling smoke. On the main road outside the town, the plunder of a wrecked beer garden was scattered through a cleared grove. Farther along the road, toward the city, abandoned farmhouses looked over golden fields of unharvested wheat and pale green rows of tasseled corn. Over the red-clay road, farmers and their wives, their children and their old people, trudged toward Richmond.

They straggled into Venable Street, past the Queen Anne house where Mrs. Fitchett watched from a dormer window, down the slope of Seventeenth Street to where the columned arches of the Old Market stretched shadows toward the slave block, up Franklin Street hill past the Ballard and Exchange hotels where rays of the falling sun flashed in field glasses upon the roofs, and into the rolling green hills of Capitol Square where groups huddled in the

dusky shadows of trees. The refugees joined the townspeople, and waited. The only sound was the blasting thunder of the guns beyond Mechanicsville.

From the roof of the Capitol, St. George Paxton watched the refugees while he waited for Virginius Kirby to finish with the telescope. Jefferson Davis, he knew, watched too, with his family and friends, from his gray mansion on Court End hill. He heard, too, the crash of those guns that echoed in the twilight over the Chickahominy. What was the President thinking as he saw his people, homeless and exiled, and heard those cannons smashing out the lives of his countrymen? Did he worry over the invaded young country, or did he ponder his own fate if the new capital fell?

"It's no use trying to see any more, St. George. It's too dark." Virginius was gray, and in the gathering dusk the lines in his face looked black.

St. George stared toward the river valley where hot smoke billowed and red splashed from the mouths of unseen guns. A shell burst high and golden sparks streaked down the deepening blue sky. "I believe the firing is growing heavier again."

"Maybe our men are trying another attack. I don't think that Yankee line has moved back an inch."

The bellow of the heavy guns deepened and vibrated through him. The roof shook, glass rattled. The people on the roof stirred. He heard the rising crackle of muskets. Then, on a dusk breeze, there floated faintly an echo of a high-pitched, long-drawn scream. "*The Rebel Yell!*" The crowd cried out. "They're charging again."

Despite himself, St. George felt his heart beat faster as the thunder reverberated through him. The savage yell of charging men mingled with the thin crackle of muskets, and the old beau knew a premonitory fear. It was not for himself. The premonition was for the people on the roof, hushed with anxiety. He looked where they looked, where the night fell in smoky billows over a red arc of roaring guns. That arc did not move back.

"Stonewall Jackson must not have come." Virginius' voice was lifeless.

"Are you sure they were depending on him?" St. George looked at him.

"I've heard enough in the War Office to know they expected him to sweep around the Yankee flank and rear while A. P. Hill attacked in front. But while I was out there this afternoon, A. P. Hill attacked without him, and Longstreet and D. H. Hill were moving through Mechanicsville in support when I left. A. P. Hill had cleared the town and the Yankees had taken a strong position behind breastworks on the opposite bank of Beaver Dam Creek."

"And you think they're still fighting along that creek?"

"I'm sure of it. . . . Listen! It's dying down."

The fury left the firing and the evening breeze brought no more rebel yells. St. George's fear ebbed with the fighting, leaving only a strange sadness. He was not given much to emotions these days, but he knew Beaver Dam Creek from possum-hunting days. The near bank was soggy and covered with dense thickets. The opposite bank, heavily wooded, reared sharply. He could not tell Virginius that it might well be a deathtrap, for his two nephews were there. His sadness for his friend, for the young men out there in the smoke-hot night, for all these people on the roof, would not lift.

"I've never heard guns from where Jackson was supposed to be." The war clerk's gloomy voice sounded in the darkness. "I reckon he did n't get here."

The dying thunder of the guns was like a summer storm rumbling down the river. "Do you suppose the United States Army in the Valley discovered he was slipping away to join Lee?"

"We have n't heard of any alarms there. McDowell is still waiting in front of Washington against Jackson's attack. They don't know where he is."

St. George shifted nearer him, peered at his stricken face. Virginius still watched the sulphurous clouds that billowed through the blackness over the Chickahominy. Isolated flashes lit the horizon

on the far bank of Beaver Dam Creek. A shell burst high and livid lines streaked across the new bright stars. The crackle of muskets was faint and fitful.

"Virginius," he said quietly, "does this mean that Lee's whole plan of breaking the siege has failed?"

"I don't know. McClellan is still divided by the Chickahominy. Magruder is still facing him, making a demonstration to keep McClellan from sending reinforcements over to the Mechanicsville side. But, you see, if Jackson had come up and gotten in the flank and rear, McClellan's whole right wing would've been caught between pincers and annihilated, and the Yankees would be cut off from their base."

"Yes, I see that, but what will happen if Jackson failed to get here?"

"What you saw," he said hopelessly. "We made a frontal attack and drove them out of Mechanicsville, which does n't mean a row of beans . . . except that we've lost men and probably warned them that Jackson has come down from the Valley."

St. George hesitated to speak his mind. The people on the roof were murmuring now. From snatches of their words it was plain they knew nothing of what had happened. They did n't even know if it were safe to go to bed. Where the rolling smoke clouds held the secret of the city's fate, it was almost silent. In that silence, they seemed to sense defeat. He spoke with slow deliberation.

"Then, Virginius, if they're warned of Jackson's coming, so that plan is nullified, and if they could sweep aside Magruder's handful on the south of the river and seize the city, would n't it be the point of wisdom to surrender the city — save further loss of blood, and the desolation of —"

"God, Saint!" Virginius whirled on him as though a new source of life had vitalized him. "If Richmond falls, the Confederacy falls. We manufacture virtually all the cannon here and half the munitions."

"I see." Before the war clerk's passionate zeal, he could n't go on.

He couldn't say that the fate of Virginia, and their city, should be of more importance than the Confederacy. Virginius Kirby was caught up in the cause of the new country, like a religion. It was the same with these anxious people on the roof, who had endangered their city and their civilization for an ideal with which they had no business.

He glanced over the sloping roofs of the old city, at the lights glowing in dormer windows. Accumulations of lifetimes were stored in those houses, and mementos of the dead. The wide streets, shaded by old trees, were sweet with associations for all of them, reaching backward into time and perpetuating their customs and loyalties. Yet he would be hooted down if he warned these people that they had exposed all that for a dying and half-foreign way of living; that thousands of men who walked these streets on summer nights would never walk them again, nor would there be children of theirs to walk them.

He heard around him women crying softly and men cursing under their breath in fear for their city, but he knew he would be their enemy if he spoke. He let his gaze roam over the lighted windows of old haunts he had known when he was young and walked the streets on hot nights like this, and he was glad that he was old.

"My men can stand almost anything. They can stand that."
— *General Stonewall Jackson to General Lee as his troops moved into action at Gaines's Mill, the second battle of the Seven Days around Richmond, June 27, 1862*

Nobody knew why they halted. Ahead, the musket fire was very heavy and the sullen growl of guns echoed through the woods. They could see nothing in the dense pine woods that walled each side of the road. The air was thick with red-clay dust. The order

to fall out was passed along the line and the men dropped in the thin shade along the edge of the woods. They threw their stained, floppy hats beside them, slipped out of their blanket rolls and haversacks. Sweat gleamed like rain in their beards and shaggy hair, and their patched, faded uniforms were black with it. They unbuttoned shirts and dug for chiggers burrowing into their hairy flesh.

Lieutenant Dinwiddie Wade walked ahead, up the road, to discover why they had halted. He could not shake free of the tension that had tightened him all day. He passed the Stonewall Brigade to the head of the column. The woods ended and rough ground sloped in front of him. Along the edge of the trees men of another outfit were resting. Stonewall Jackson stood a few feet from the woods, sucking at a lemon, and peering under the brim of his faded cadet cap at another general. A close-cropped beard bordered the other general's face, spare, intelligent, determined, and driving eyes were fixed on Old Jack as he talked. That must be D. H. Hill, Jackson's brother-in-law. Both were sprayed with red-clay dust and Stonewall's thick beard was tinted with it. Dinwiddie grew conscious of the men along the woods staring at him. He knew a swift pride in being "one of Jackson's men."

A young officer stepped out from the troops and walked toward him. Rivulets streaked his saddle-brown face and his skin might have been wet leather. Dinwiddie recognized Baylor Warwick and started eagerly toward him. He was an old beau of Mildred's and Dinwiddie remembered him as a quickly smiling youth, with beautiful manners, in his parlor on West Franklin Street. He grasped his hand and shook it heartily.

"I'm so glad to see you, Baylor," he cried. "You're the first person I've met from Richmond."

"I'm glad to see you, sir." The smile of memory flashed briefly. "My men are very curious about you-all after your wonderful Valley campaign. I reckon Stonewall Jackson is the most famous soldier in the country."

"Yes, yes," Dinwiddie dismissed that. "But how is Richmond standing the siege? Did that battle yesterday help any?"

"It would 've broken it completely by crushing McClellan's right if you-all had come up and coöperated with us at Mechanicsville, like we expected. But they've just retreated a few miles and taken a strong position on that hill over yonder, behind another creek. What happened to Jackson yesterday, anyway?"

Dinwiddie stiffened under the appraisal in those bleak, weary eyes. Suddenly he realized he was not talking with a deferential young man who visited his home as his daughter's guest, but to a grim major.

"We just could n't make it," he said in a subdued voice. "You know that terrain we marched over?"

"I've fought over it for the last month."

"Then you can appreciate how hard it must've been on men accustomed to the Valley country. Even the Richmond men in Company F suffered. I've never seen such heat and dust, and the flies and mosquitoes were a torment. Then, the roads were obstructed by felled timber and we were harassed by cavalry. None of us knew if the Yankees knew who we were."

"They know now all right," Major Warwick answered brusquely. "That's A. P. Hill and Longstreet you hear hitting that hill way over yonder on the other side, east of Cold Harbor Tavern. Hill was badly cut up yesterday. If we frig around here all afternoon, he'll be hurt worse to-day. We expected to combine with you-all and catch them in flank and rear, like we wanted to yesterday. Now Jackson's holding back D. H. Hill here and waiting for the Yanks to be driven across our front. But they're not driving worth a damn, and won't, with the position they've got on top of that hill in front of us."

Lieutenant Wade looked across the sloping ground in his front to where it dipped into a ravine. On the opposite side of the ravine, a wooded hill slanted upward to a plateau, where the sun gleamed on unseen guns.

"Is that hill on our front their flank?"

The major nodded morosely. "But it's too late to box them and if we don't attack soon, it'll be too late to drive them back across the river."

"Does that mean," Dinwiddie asked hesitantly, "that McClellan can send over reinforcements to-morrow and protect his base of supply?"

"Hell, he won't have to. He'll gobble up that little army of Magruder in front of him south of the Chickahominy and march into Richmond to-morrow like he was on parade. And they could keep us right here on this side, too."

The lieutenant shifted uneasily. He glanced at the wraiths of smoke drifting over the hill. "I'll admit," he said apologetically, "I never fully understood this campaign."

"Forget this campaign stuff! You're not in the Valley now, manœuvring for position on country roads. You're trying to break a siege on your city. Don't you grasp the simple fact that if we don't carry this position to-day, you and I will be homeless to-morrow? And when Richmond falls, the Confederacy falls, and we'll be without a country."

Dinwiddie said nothing. He looked away from the angry face. A sweating horse galloped along the edge of the woods. The animal slid on his hocks in front of the two generals and a hot-faced man plunged off him.

"That's one of General Lee's couriers!" The sullen fatigue lifted from Major Warwick. "I'll wager Lee is ordering Jackson in."

"Then I'd better be getting back to my men." Dinwiddie turned quickly away and hurried along the columns. No one had respect now for anything but military success. Yet Baylor was right. That was what should be respected when they were trying to save Richmond. A bugle sounded. The tired troops struggled to their feet. Voices echoed through the woods. Dust rose.

The lieutenant broke into a trot. His lips were tight together. When he reached his brigade the companies had formed. Captain Morgan was leaving Colonel Cunningham, their old captain. The colonel was leading the whole brigade to-day. Captain Mor-

gan fell in beside Dinwiddie on their way to Company F. His thin dark moustache drooped over his fine mouth.

"We're going in, lieutenant." He looked graver than usual. "Our division is to move through these woods, the brigades separately, to come out in support of A. P. Hill. Things look bad. If we fail to carry this position, Richmond is doomed. We're the only Richmond company in this brigade, you know, and we want to lead the way."

"I'll do my best, captain."

"God be with you." They shook hands.

Dinwiddie felt better. He ran to his platoon as orders rang through the pine trees. They deployed into the woods and the firing seemed louder. The brush was heavy underfoot and so thick he could n't see beyond his Twenty-first Regiment. He heard the men crashing ahead. They walked slowly. Nobody spoke. The sun did n't shine through the leaves, but the woods felt like an oven. In front, he glimpsed the shaggy heads of skirmishers. They bobbed up and disappeared in the thickets.

Seeing nothing but the dense pine woods, hearing nothing but the crashing men and the distant firing, walking without a guide and only the wary skirmishers ahead, he realized what Baylor Warwick meant about the difference of open campaigns and fighting to break a siege on your own city. Somewhere near, Cold Harbor Tavern nestled under its shady trees. He pictured the white frame, dormer-windowed house, with its white picket fence running under trees, and he pictured Isobel, cool and lovely beside him in the surrey as they drove to the tavern on a hot afternoon like this. No one would leave sweltering Richmond to-day for the tavern. Some of these men walking with him had also known its pleasant shade, as had their wives and mothers and daughters, who waited now in the besieged city. Watching the men, he saw them stiffen. They grew as rigid as pointers. All along the line the crashing ceased. The only sound was the firing.

Straight ahead the woods lightened. Dinwiddie pulled out his watch. They had been in the woods more than an hour. He

knew they had lost their way. His breath came hard and it hurt to swallow. Could they be coming out in the Yankee lines? The men moved ahead again, toward the light. He saw the edge of the woods. The sun was setting and the sky was red over Richmond. They broke out into a waving field of broomstraw. The other regiments came popping out along the woods. They moved in open lines across the field. Straight ahead, a knoll rose against the horizon.

Muskets crackled thinly beyond the knoll. Guns roared in broken thunder. Knots of men moved on their side of the knoll. As he drew closer, Dinwiddie saw the men were hairy and fierce, in motley gray, and he knew he was in his own lines. His breath oozed out in a hot sigh. He felt the men relax. They moved steadily toward the knoll.

He saw horsemen ride up to a neatly dressed, still, gray soldier on a big gray horse. Nearer, Dinwiddie noticed the powerful build of the officer. A long-brimmed felt hat shaded his eyes and a closely trimmed, darkish beard and moustache covered the lower part of his face. He might have been carved in stone. The troops near him lifted up a high cheer and it came singing along the lines. The still gray soldier lifted his hat. Lieutenant Wade knew then why, to the army in front of Richmond, General Robert E. Lee had become a symbol within four weeks of command.

They quickened their stride and moved up the knoll. Orders rang out over the rising rattle of muskets and the men wavered to a halt at the crest. The lieutenant's breath sucked in. Straight across from them a wooded hill clattered with muskets and smoke floated over the trees like a veil. The hill pitched sharply into a ravine and from the ravine an open field sloped to where he stood. Baylor Warwick had said the Yankees held a strong position. It was impregnable! Below him, he saw a scattered gray wave ebbing back up the slope, away from the deepening crackle from the hill.

An officer galloped out from the troops below them and Colonel Cunningham rode down to meet him. The retreating troops

halted on the slope and stared up at Jackson's Second Brigade. Their faces were black with gun smoke and set as in death. Colonel Cunningham saluted their officer and galloped up the hill. The other officer waved his sabre. His men looked dog-tired as their broken lines re-formed and faced again the smoking hill. They loaded their muskets slowly.

Colonel Cunningham rode up in front of his old company and yelled:—

"Men, we were lost in the woods and came out on the extreme right, but we're much needed. The Yankee line hasn't been carried anywhere, and it's got to be—now or never. This brigade below us is Anderson's of Longstreet, and they're going back in with us in support." He turned toward a sweating soldier who thundered up, his horse plunging. They spoke briefly. The fire deepened. The colonel cried: "The whole line is advancing. General Jackson says we must sweep the field with the bayonet. . . . Forward!"

The men plunged down the slope. The thin high crackle of muskets rushed to meet them. The wooded hill across the ravine burst into a deafening rattle. Smoke billowed out of the trees and floated in wreaths over the trotting men of Anderson's brigade. They were swooping toward the ravine. On his left, Dinwiddie saw dim blurred waves of gray flowing through the thickening smoke toward the ravine. The guns on the plateau opened up and the ground trembled and they were swept with a gale of iron.

He glanced at his men. They were coming on, faces set, eyes hot, their torn jackets flapping in the wind. The smoke became a fog and he could hardly see beyond his company. A shell burst and he staggered. It was like a blow on the skull. Fragments whistled. A man bent in the middle, coughed, and sat down. Through rifts in the choking smoke, he saw Anderson's brigade on the right swallowed up in the shadows of the ravine. He would be there next. His breath clogged in his throat.

He looked around for Captain Morgan. In the smoke all the figures were misty. The rest of the regiment was only a blur.

Beyond them he saw nothing. A cannon ball screeched over his head, but he did n't duck any more. Then, right in front of him, the ground dropped away in the high bank of a creek. Men stumbled to a quick stop and looked at him. A shell crashed and the ground coughed up, showering him. He looked again for the captain. Now he could n't even see the rest of the company. Shot from the hill swept over them like a wind. The men were waiting for him.

"Throw your guns across the creek," he shouted, "and jump in."

His voice sounded to him like a despairing wail in the rattling thunder. The air sung with a metallic buzz. He moved to the edge of the bank. Wild ferns squashed under his shoes. He jumped. The brown water cooled his shins. He heard crashing all along the creek, but he could n't see. His eyes watered from the smoke. The roar seemed to beat him down behind these slippery banks. Maybe he had better stay here. The rest of the line might have gone back. He might lead his platoon into Yankee hands. If only he could see Captain Morgan. Voices drifted hoarsely out of the bedlam. What were they saying? Whose were they? Where was everybody?

Men were pushing others up the steep bank without orders. Half of them were out. One toppled backward. He splashed near the lieutenant and the water turned red. The men on top started pulling out those in the creek. He had never been a good officer, he knew that now. He had never been advanced, like others. Cunningham was out of the company entirely, leading the brigade. Captain Morgan had enlisted after he had, as adjutant. He saw the last man being pulled out. He could n't stay in the creek alone. He lifted up his arms. He was hoisted to the top. The men had scattered and were firing from behind trees. He squatted behind a log.

Ahead, the ground tilted toward a rail fence. He glimpsed logs stacked between the rails, flashes of brass buttons, a blurred face, and the flickering sheen of muskets. Shots from behind that fence hailed through the woods. A beardless young man in a

sweat-black shirt and ripped gray trousers sprawled in a raspberry bush. A battered brown hat shaded his staring eyes. His still fingers were clenched about his rifle. Dinwiddie wet his lips. He glanced around him desperately. He was n't afraid for himself. Cunningham had said they were only in support; but General Jackson had ordered them to sweep the field with the bayonet. Dusk was settling in the smoking woods and he could barely see the men of his own platoon. Up on the hill, on both sides of him, the rattle rose higher. It might be the charge, or a counterattack. Then off in the woods, where Anderson's brigade had plunged, came a long-drawn, high-pitched scream. Eerie and savage, it wailed through the bedlam and screeched down the spine of the lieutenant. *Oh God, help me to be a good officer now. . . .* He jumped up from the log, waving his sabre, and shrieked at the top of his voice:—

“Remember Butler in New Orleans and don't let McClellan in Richmond. Charge, boys, for God's sake, charge!”

Dusky forms rose whooping out of the shadows and floated forward through the trees. The Rebel Yell was caught up closer on his right and he was sure, then, that the whole line was advancing. His own men bayed the fierce cry and it tore through his throat. He became one of the hairy horde lunging for the fence.

Shadows took form behind the fence, moving backward up the hill. Yellow spurted from them and minnie balls whined through the murky dusk. A man beside him bent like a sapling in a wind. Dinwiddie stumbled through a locust bush. An unseen hand plucked his sleeve, a breath blew hot on his cheek. Then he was at the fence and over. The hill climbed sharply, heavily wooded. So many blurred figures rushed through the trees that it looked as if the woods were alive. The swelling crackle reverberated and the Valkyrie scream wailed high and thin. Dinwiddie forgot the rest of the regiment, his superiors. He was leading his baying handful up the hill, straight at a second breastwork.

In one moment dusky figures loomed behind it and in the next his men were swarming over it. The hill grew steeper. Lead

rained down from a breastwork higher up. The lieutenant saw the deep blue sky beyond the breastwork and he knew that was the crest of the hill. His breath became labored. He staggered through underbrush. Yellow spurted over a pile of logs. He saw loose earth and haversacks between them. A dark face under a blue cap was right in front of him. Blue eyes stared. Dinwiddie whipped out his revolver, fired. The blue man did not move. Dinwiddie stood still, gasping in air, aimed the wavering pistol. It kicked in his hand, again and again. The savages swooped over the breastwork and a soleless shoe glanced against the blue cap. The face disappeared. For a moment, the lieutenant was alone in the swirling smoke. He scurried up the hill after his men.

He climbed the fence and stumbled out on level ground. The confusion broke the hard centre of his fury. He stood there, panting and shaking, the gun trembling in his fist. Somewhere field guns blasted. Shadowy men swarmed around him, flowing out in widening circles, covering a plateau that stretched as far as he could see. There were no regular lines. In broken waves and milling clots they churned through the smoky, dusty dusk. He saw the dull glint of guns, points of red stabbing everywhere. The yelling was deafening. Groans rose from the earth. *Water, for the love of Christ, water. . . .* Peering through the hot fog, he saw a knot of blue men standing silently, their hands raised. The field guns roared. A line loomed through the dusk at his right, sweeping toward him.

He backed toward the fence, his wet hand clenching convulsively on the gun. Then he recognized the motley gray. They were Anderson's brigade. They must have carried the line at the extreme right. The relief drained his strength. He slumped against the fence, trying to steady himself. Off to the left, a sudden crackle broke. He saw a solid dark line moving toward a farmhouse, blocked out against the sky. A ragged line, gray as the dust, was on the far side of the blue. Dinwiddie started forward. The Confederates were cut off. A hand clutched him and he sprawled. *Water. . . .*

Panicky, he struggled free, stumbled over bodies, slipped in blood. This might be a counterattack. He searched blurred faces for an officer. By the farmhouse the rattle deepened and he saw gray ghosts flowing through the dusk toward the solid dark line. The dark line grew still. The Yankees were enveloped. It must be at least a regiment that was captured there. The field guns roared again. The musket firing was thinner and he located the sound of the battery as across the plateau. His danger was over now. He moved among the milling men. Gold gleamed on a torn gray sleeve. He saw captain's bars on a rent collar. He grabbed at the officer.

"I can't find my commanding officers," he cried. "What shall I do?"

Gray eyes peered out of a grimy, tired face. "I know what I'm go' do, and that's rest right heah. One of Jackson's men, ain't you?"

"Yes, we got lost and came out here. I can't find my —"

"You could n't've come out at a better place." The captain lowered his eyes and started to fill a pipe. "What took Stonewall so long to come in?"

"We were waiting for the Yankees to be driven across our front."

"Driven! If you had n't come up when you did, McClellan'd been in Richmond to-morrow. We were about done for. If only Jackson —"

"Yes, I know." Dinwiddie moved away from him, back into the churning mass. He heard the padded thunder of cavalry. Everybody whirled around. Where the field guns still roared, immense figures loomed through the smoking dusk. Fireflies darted near the farmhouse and a short, fierce volley crackled over the pounding hoofs. Dinwiddie saw the Yankee cavalry break and the gigantic figures recede. Gray hordes floated after them and the field guns grew silent. The last Yankee battery had been taken. No more cannons thundered. Muskets rattled fitfully.

The men were sitting on the ground, lighting pipes, biting off chews of tobacco, searching dead Yankees for cigars. For them the battle was over. For a moment Dinwiddie wished he were

one of them, and could give up to his own weariness. He moved on, searching for his men. A scraggly scarecrow was pulling off a Yankee's shoes. The scarecrow was one of his corporals.

"Where's your squad?" Dinwiddie said.

"I dunno, suh."

"Find them and hold them right here. I'll form the platoon around you." He walked farther across the plateau. He had never seen so many dead. A mounted officer rode out of the fog.

"Colonel Cunningham!" Dinwiddie ran toward him. "I can't find Captain Morgan. What shall I do with my platoon?"

"I can't find anybody, but never mind. Just bivouac your platoon here."

"But have we carried the whole position?"

"The whole line. Hood's Texans broke it in the centre with the bayonet. They advanced without firing a shot and the first Yankee line got panicky and carried the other two in their rout. Law's brigade and Pickett's Virginians also broke through."

"How about our brigades?"

"They got lost in the woods and each one came out at a different place, but where they were most needed. It's too dark and too much confusion for pursuit or re-forming now. We'll organize in the morning."

Dinwiddie turned slowly to round up his scattered platoon. Most of the men were so exhausted they were lying on the ground where they had stopped at the end of their charge. He hated to make them move. They would have nothing to eat but the corn pones they had in their haversacks because the wagons would not be up the hill to-night. That meant he would sleep without a blanket. Then he remembered that only seven miles away he had a home.

"Prisoners state that McClellan, realizing the fact that he was cut off from his base of supplies, commenced evacuating his position on this side of the Chickahominy as early as Friday night . . . moving siege pieces and such commissary stores as he had the means of transporting. A great quantity of the latter . . . was destroyed. . . ."—*Richmond Whig*, July 1, 1862

Dawn dripped gray over the hill on the opposite bank of Black Creek when the advance clattered across the bridge which Captain Blackford's engineers had built during the night. The horses plunged into the underbrush where the Yankee ambushade had been flushed by Pelham's guns yesterday afternoon. The mountaineer scout lifted his gaunt face in the morning mist and sniffed. His tobacco-streaked beard, reaching to his chest, stuck out like a muzzle.

"I don' smell of nary Yank. You sure we come to the right place foh theah base, cap'n?"

"We've come to the base they had when we circled their army." Chester had been breveted lieutenant after Seven Pines, and Tibe had called him captain ever since. "You saw it then."

"I see it then but I don' ricollect it much. I cain't figguh why we ain't seen moh Yanks if'n this is theah base."

Chester could n't understand it either, but he had learned what to keep to himself. They broke out of the underbrush and pushed slowly up the hill. He saw the crest drawn in a line against the lightening sky. Tibe swung his carbine around in front of him. The other cavalrymen did too.

"Thet'd be a nice place foh Yanks to be layin' foh to gobble us up."

Chester nodded. He glanced back for Stuart's main body. Pelham's horse guns rumbled over the bridge. They looked a long

way off. But he was an officer now; he was where he had worked and prayed to be.

"They must've abandoned their base or we could n't have approached so easily." He was thinking out loud. "We saw their fires last night."

"Yeh, 'n' I seen you loosen yoh gun 'n' shake out yoh sabre. I 'd a heap ruther see theah base 'bandoned than heah tell of it."

Chester saw the men spreading out. There was no sound but the horses plodding on the turf. If the Yankees were lying here . . .

"Hell, cap'n," Tibe said, "let's ride. I cain't wait no moh."

Chester knew he was right. He waved his sabre and dug in the spurs. The big chestnut lunged under him, the fresh dawn wind whipped his face, and the padded thunder of the hoofs rolled up the hill. When they broke the crest, he saw the long plain in front of Rooney Lee's White House stretched before him, and, as far as he could see, smashed piles of army stores smouldered. Without an order, the riders pulled up and stared. Behind the burning wreckage, the remains of Rooney Lee's home lifted thin smoke against the bluing sky.

"Damn!" Tibe grunted. "As empty of Yanks as a roost is of chickens after Hood's Texicans done passed."

"Keep your eyes sharp, anyway." This could n't be the end of all their hard riding, of detaching themselves from the main army, of all the plans . . . a smoking pile of abandoned stores. There must be some Yankee trick. He glanced back. The main body had n't cleared the underbrush. It was up to him. He'd rather die than move into an ambush. They were walking their horses, eyes strained ahead. They passed a deserted sutler's wagon, its shafts in the grass. Then he saw the Yankees, a knot of them standing in dejected patience. They had no arms. Deserters! McClellan had changed his base. He did n't want to have to report that to General Stuart. "Leave those stragglers for General Stuart to question. Let's have a look at this refuse."

"Don' sound so doleful, cap'n," Tibe said. "It'll be a lot in them sto'es whut we won't refuse. Heh-heh-heh."

They trotted past the Yankee stragglers. Near them a broken

army wagon drooped in a clutter of boxes. Rifles, blankets, overcoats, and haversacks were scattered over the trampled ground, increasing as they approached the burning piles. The cavalrymen began to groan and gasp, then curse and whistle, as they stared with popping eyes. Tibe gave a wheezy sigh that fluttered his scraggly moustache.

"Great Gawd Almighty. You reckon they left all this foh us 'thout pizenin' it, cap'n? I ain't never see the like."

"Take a good look, men, and see what you can save."

They rolled off their horses, whooping, and went at the stores like hounds at a rabbit hole. They rushed back out, their cheeks bulging and food oozing from their mouths. They broke boxes, knocked the heads off bottles, slashed open tins with sabres. A yellow-toothed farm boy proudly clutched a toothbrush. A keg-chested Irishman swallowed chocolate mints whole. Tibe came up to Chester, chortling.

"Look heah, puttin' little fish in these yere cans when they were camped right alongside the York River. Whut these little things taste like anyhow?" He swallowed a sardine. "Pugh. I would n't tease my gullet with nasty little minnows like thet. The Yanks are sho strange critters."

"Tibe, there're thousands of stands of rifles and a lot of corn that have n't been hurt. Get the men to gather those, and anything else we can use." He whirled his horse. The main body was dismounting on the plain, where the stores began, and General Stuart and his staff were looking at them. Chester put his big gelding into a trot. As much as the army could use the salvaged arms and supplies, it was small reward for their bitter campaign and the heavy casualties. He pulled up near General Stuart.

The general was talking with Farley, the aide. The early morning breeze ruffled his moustaches and plume, the great beard shone, and the golden spurs and yellow sash gleamed in the sun. Behind him some of the troops worked over a salvaged ice machine and others squeezed lemons. Bottles of champagne lay like quail in the grass.

The three giants of Jeb Stuart's cavalry stood around them. It was easy to see what occupied the simple mind of Sergeant Hagan.

His gorilla chest swelled, and above the black beard, which covered everything but his nose, his eyes glistened in speculation. Baron Heros von Borcke, the Prussian staff officer who had run the blockade, looked beyond the men at the smoking stores. Standing erect with one arm cocked on the iron hilt of his great sword, one leg bent above the rolled top of his huge boots, his curved moustache swept out from his puzzled face, and his eyes were pained. Chester knew he was saddened by the waste. Rooney Lee stared beyond the stores at the ruins of his home. His eyes were kind like his father's, and Chester turned away from him. He did n't want to know that soldier's thoughts as he looked at the house where he had brought his wife.

Then General Stuart called him. "They got away from us, old Cary. McClellan changed his base and must've scurried for his gunboats on the James. I was afraid he might get his army out of the trap General Lee set for him. I want you to ride down to the lower Chickahominy with the First Virginia. I must be sure McClellan's not retreating down the Peninsula."

Chester saluted and swung up on his horse. He was glad to get away from this scene of waste. Scouting, he might do some good yet. They must trap McClellan's army. He must n't escape and be able to return and besiege Richmond again. Too much had been lost just to break the siege. They had to crush him. General Fitz Lee's regiment swung toward him.

The troopers had finished with the ice machine and were pouring cold champagne lemonade into big goblets. Hagan hovered over them solicitously. Even von Borcke turned away from his contemplation of the wreckage. Only Rooney Lee had n't moved. The men served the officers. The general's drink contained no champagne. A skinny city man, wearing Yankee breeches, came forward with a box of Havana cigars, puffing one himself.

Chester walked his horse to the head of the First Virginia column and reported to General Fitz Lee. The troopers cast longing glances at those plundering the stores with joyful yelps. The line moved forward. As he rode toward the rising sun, in search of the re-

treating Union army, he saw the officers lounging on the lawn with their champagne and cigars, and Sweeney was coming up with his banjo.

If you want to have a good time, jine the cavalry . . .

*No moh driver's lash for me,
No moh, no moh;
No moh driver's lash for me,
Many thousand go. . . .*

They were rolling dead bodies in an open trench as if they were shoveling trash. In the July heat the stench was sickening. Lieutenant Philip Parramore, Medical Purveyor, checked his horse as he breasted the wooded hill. He held his handkerchief over his nose. Behind him, one of his two-man detail spat. The grave-diggers leaned on their shovels and looked at Philip. One of them brushed a mist of flies away from his head and squirted a stream of tobacco juice across the trench. It splattered on the horse's fetlocks and she shied. Philip nervously patted her neck.

"I'm looking for abandoned medical supplies," he said. "Do you know if there are any around here?"

"Naw. This was the left flank of the Yankee line and they did n't have no supplies here . . . except shoes."

Philip's eyes lowered to the trench. Bluish, bloated, grimy naked feet protruded from blue trousers. His stomach heaved. Convulsively he jammed in the spurs and the small mare plunged. Philip rocked back, jerking the reins, then releasing them as he grabbed the horn. The horse skittered around the trench at the crest of the hill.

"Heh-heh! Come chargin' up the hill like Jackson's Second Brigade."

Philip tried to quiet the mare, but she fought the bit, moving out across an open plateau. The field was covered with people. His two-man detail trotted up behind him and his little horse

quieted. Philip wiped his greasy face. All along the crest of the hill, where the woods ended, gravediggers rolled bodies into trenches. A broken fence ran along the top of the hill, with ripped haversacks and scorched blankets and clods of earth shoved against it. That must have been the last Yankee line in the Cold Harbor battle. He thought of the Confederates charging up that hill he had just ridden. The sweat turned cold.

Around a wrecked caisson, dripping men in dirty gray were cutting harness off dead horses. A quartermaster captain, his jacket and striped trousers black with sweat, fanned away flies while he directed soldiers who were piling blankets and overcoats and haversacks in heaps. Two bearded old men drove a wagon loaded with Yankee Enfield rifles. Cursing soldiers under a gray-moustached officer hitched heaving work horses to gun carriages with "U S" on the boxes. Nothing resembled medical supplies.

Then he saw masses of people creeping over the torn earth, bent in gruesome harvest. Some were soldiers but most were civilians—all ages, all classes, men and women. The stooped people picked among débris that was strewn across the plateau as far as he could see. The stench of rotten food mingled with that of the corpses. Philip brought his handkerchief over his nose again, pretending to wipe his face.

"Look for medical supplies here," he called to the two men, and turned his horse toward a farmhouse. Nobody looked up as he moved through the mob. A gray old woman with frenzied eyes held out her apron and crammed pickle jars in it, on top of meat tins and Edinburgh ale. A sallow-faced young man in a gray plaid suit staggered under a case of oranges. A red-faced soldier with sweat circling a scar on his cheek was drinking lemon syrup while he stood guard over packages of ground coffee. Soldiers worked out from him in a widening arc, pushing away the civilians from any coffee they found. A fat man, sitting on his coat beside a stinking heap of smashed sardine cans, drank a bottle of porter. Philip's horse suddenly skittered. Four dead mules lay almost in a heap and a cloud of flies buzzed up from them around Philip.

Nausea washed up in him and his head swam. He pushed the horse fast through fresh red-clay mounds in what had been a garden. There was a narrow strip of shade beside a shattered wall of the square, gray farmhouse. He fanned his face with his visored cap. Through the wrecked window beside him he saw walls honey-combed with minnie balls and brown blotches of blood on once polished floors. He was afraid of being sick. His detail rode up then and looked at him curiously.

"Nuthin' round heah."

He nodded, pressing his lips tight together. He tasted the bile in his throat. He tensed his torso and walked the horse ahead. The sick wave receded. A desolated wheat field stretched from behind the house to a distant drop. Scavengers grouped around trench-digging soldiers. Nearer, he saw the scavengers were also soldiers. They worked silently, bent over, pulling shoes off dead Yankees. Philip tried not to look. He faced directly a red-bearded barrel of an officer chewing a cud. Red clay and lime coated him from slouch hat to cracked boots.

"I'm looking for medical supplies," Philip began.

"You're about four days too late." The officer bit off his words in a harsh voice. "You'll have to follow the line of the god-damned Yankee retreat to Malvern Hill."

"Where they fought yesterday?"

"Yes, *yesterday*!" He glanced up out of hard blue eyes. "The fighting's over and you're safe. So is McClellan. He's at the James and all you people who skulked in Richmond can honeydip over the fields where his damned army has been running for the last seven days."

Philip turned from the contempt and flicked in his spurs. The little mare broke into a fast canter. Why must he always falter before any man with a sure grip on reality? Could n't he remember that he too now lived in reality, with authority, and money, and a secret power? The fear seemed to lie too deep, down in the memories of his pose-life, and pulled at him with invisible cords. It was the old fear that he would be found out, for even now he

wanted to be what he was not. In the War Office and Medical Department, around the Spotswood Hotel and Swan Tavern, he was accepted by the departmental clerks and subofficials, the surgeons and assistants, the quartermasters and ordnance officers and details. It gave him the illusion of complete acceptance. But here on the field the fighting man's contempt was revealed, and, above all, he wanted now to be accepted by the soldiers.

He saw where the brush was mashed, winding down the slope, and the earth rutted with gun carriage and wagon wheels. Split haversacks and blankets lay in the brush. He was on the line of the retreat. How would it feel to be a soldier hot in pursuit of the United States Army? Mounted, he would be in the cavalry advance, his old dream. He came out on a rutted road. With his two men following, he hurried his mare into a gallop over the hilly road that wound toward the Chickahominy.

Rounding a curve, he saw the sluggish, spreading river below him. His excitement choked off and his heart jammed in his throat. Blue soldiers moved over the road on the opposite bank. Paralysis left his hands and he started to haul in on the reins. Then he saw dust-gray men with shining muskets behind and beside the Yankees. Prisoners! He released the reins as his contracted breath gaped out. He was shaking, and hot with shame.

He pounded across the bridges that Stonewall Jackson had flung across the swampy waters. Mounds of rice and grain and piles of wrecked pontoons smouldered on the banks and on the islands. Parts of uniforms and more blankets lay trampled in the mud. He passed the silent soldiers, looking away from the shaggy-bearded Confederates. He was still sickened by his shame. Slowing to a walk up the winding road, he wondered what it was that he lacked. These men could n't be so careless of their lives, indifferent to hardship. He could endure hardship, even risk his life. There was the old fear—not of death, but of life. He feared he would not measure up in the eyes of those who belonged.

He turned into the Williamsburg Stage Road and passed McClellan's abandoned breastworks around Seven Pines. They

had been close then! What would have happened if they had reached Richmond? Suppose all the departments had been called out to fight at the inner lines? That might happen yet. . . . He shuddered away from the thought.

He glanced at the débris that littered the roadside, searching again for medical supplies. Rifles gleamed dully in the trampled grass, broken wagons sprawled. The wreckage thickened. In a clearing he saw wrecked ambulances, then broken stretchers and cots, split boxes, and everywhere were scattered strips and wads of graying bandages splotted with brown blood. This was evidently the hospital base where McClellan had abandoned two thousand wounded.

"Look around here, men," Philip said. "We'll surely get all the supplies we can carry in this field hospital."

He leaned back in the saddle and unloosened his collar. His jacket felt like a hot blanket swathing him. He realized that he was close to the battleground of Savage Station, where Magruder had hit the retreating Unions, expecting Stonewall Jackson to get them in flank. But Jackson had had to build those five bridges across the Chickahominy, which he had just ridden over, and did n't get up. In Richmond, when he heard of the battles, Philip thought of straight lines facing each other across open, flat fields. But these fields wandered for miles, up hills, down ravines, across creeks, through swamps, and in these dense woods thick with underbrush. It was far worse than he had imagined. You would never know where an enemy was waiting for you.

His two men came galloping toward him. A relieved sigh eased his body. At last he could get away from this place, back to his room in the Spotswood, for a clean bath, fresh linen, a change of uniform, and a glass of *amontillado* before dinner. The two men pulled up. He saw no packages. One held his nose. The other spat.

"Damnedest thing you ever saw. Bastards've thrown all the medical supplies together in a mess so's nobody can't get no moh use from them."

"No!" His brain could n't accept it. "McClellan could n't have destroyed his medical supplies when he abandoned all these wounded."

"You mout n't call 'em dee-stroyed, but they come nigh dee-stroyin' us. I swear, I never smelt nuthin' that stunk like that. Ain't ary pill even, what they ain't ruint."

Philip slumped there for a moment. He glanced at their stupid faces. He knew nothing of such men. He was afraid to chance buying their silence with a tip, and turning back. "We'll follow their line of retreat."

He crossed the field to a narrow road that jutted off the Williamsburg Road toward the river. The débris along it marked it plainly as the retreat. A man was propped against a gatepost with a red kerchief over his throat. Philip started to ask him how near the armies were, when he saw that the red was not a handkerchief. The still soldier had been sitting there a long time. He spurred the little mare into a canter again. He began to feel that he was caught up himself in all this horror and he could n't shake free of the fear that he might be yet . . . if the Yankee army returned toward Richmond.

Breasting a hill, he looked down into another river valley. Pontoons were thrown across White Oak Swamp and drooping men trudged across the bridge. They were dust-gray, with odd coats and shirts, and battered felt hats shading their eyes against the sinking sun. As he neared them, a horse galloped down the opposite slope, clattered across the bridge, and skidded to a stop among the men, eddying pools of dust. Its rider flashed a sabre in the red light and yelled at the soldiers. They did not look up. Philip checked his horse and drew to the side of the road. With gray-white and black-streaked faces, and haunted eyes that stared straight ahead, they shuffled sullenly past him. The horseman pulled up beside Philip and nodded. He was a clean-shaven young man, with delicate, handsome features, and a certain arrogance on his thin face. Captain's bars showed through the dust on his collar. He stared after the men.

"Stragglers?" The old habit to talk on equal terms surged up.

The young captain nodded. "Can't much blame them. They were shattered yesterday at Malvern Hill. We should n't have attacked. The Yanks had a strong position and we hit them in detail. I think General Lee just hated to let McClellan escape after he'd had him trapped three times, and each time something went wrong. . . . You out from Richmond?"

"Yes, Medical Department." Philip always hoped he would be taken for assistant surgeon. "I hoped to find some supplies."

"Not here. Have you heard that McClellan abandoned his White House base?"

"Yes, he did." Philip became the insider. "I also heard that McClellan would n't have escaped if Jackson had been what we expected."

"You heard wrong!" The young face sharpened in anger. "I'm with General Jackson. Day before yesterday when Longstreet and A. P. Hill hit McClellan at Glendale, we were supposed to get him in rear and crush him. You've been hearing that we did n't, I reckon. Well, we were held right here by Yankees on that hill over yonder on the other side of the swamp. The bridge had been destroyed and our men refused to rebuild it under the fire they were exposed to. General Jackson tried to shell them out and their guns were better. He tried to find a crossing for artillery and could n't. He tried everything, and there's been too damned much talk about Jackson's failure in this campaign. McClellan escaped through a lot of blunders that ruined General Lee's plans, but Jackson is not the goat."

Philip tried to recapture his assurance. "Well," he said matter-of-factly, "the siege of Richmond is lifted and the whole army did it."

The young officer gave him a disgusted glance. "Balls!" He spun around his lathered horse.

Philip sat very still, watching the lean back of the captain moving through the veils of dust. He felt the eyes of his men on him. He made himself turn around, but he could n't face them. Beyond, where the road ran over the hill, the bent stragglers were etched

against the sky. In the past year he had often felt apprehension at working with Milton Duke. From now on he would do everything, anything, to exempt himself from ever being one of those shattered men trooping back over a dusty road, or one of those still men lying in the weeds beside it.

CHAPTER XIII

"I do but quote from one of those earlier speeches when I declare that I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so; I have no inclination to do so." — *President Lincoln, on taking his oath of office, as quoted by President Davis to the Confederate Congress*

The wagon rumbled over the cobblestones of Twelfth Street. It pitched when it turned into the alley between the Wade tobacco warehouse and the back of the warehouse on Cary Street. Mildred stood with the matron and a new nurse in the doorway. She tried not to think of the groans. A wheel hub scraped the stone slab propped against the corner. *Please don' move me no moh. . . . For Jesus' sake, let me die here in peace. . . .*

The new nurse whimpered. Mildred looked at her. She was not more than eighteen and she looked like a frightened child. Her face was paper white and her eyes, staring widely, had the pale dead blue of the September sky. Mildred took hold of her arm.

"You 'll get used to it. It's hard on us all at first."

Two dirty, hairy, weather-blackened soldiers lifted an officer out of the wagon. His matted beard was gray with dust, but not as gray as the bandage around his head. One soldier shifted the weight of the heavy man. A low moan sighed through the officer's drawn lips. The matron stepped down and brushed away flies buzzing around the wound. Bright red spotted the bandage and a stream trickled through the coated dust on his face.

"I—I'm afraid I can't stand it," the new nurse whispered.

Mildred helped her down the step. "You walk up to the canal

and get a little breeze. It's awfully hot here. Come back when they're in bed."

"It is hot for September." The girl moved unsteadily over the cobblestones, close to the narrow shade of the building.

Mildred held open the door for the soldiers. "Are you hurt much, colonel?" She wiped the blood off his forehead.

"Not . . . much . . ." He tried to smile. "Can stand — anything — to have the Yankees — out of Virginia."

"Look, lady!" The driver tried to speak through his cud, but he had to spit and shift it. "Thet nurse fell down."

The girl was lying in a heap in the middle of the alley, just where the warehouse ended. Mildred ran over the cobblestones to her. A sickening odor made her falter near the girl. She looked at the canal boats on the Basin. They had no cargoes and nothing about them seemed different from the usual boats. Wind made the stench worse. Along the edge of the Basin, where the cobblestones behind the warehouse ended, was an open trench. Bluish and bloated flesh, brown with blood and black with flies, was heaped almost to the top. Mildred closed her eyes. The pile of amputated legs and arms swam through her brain. She staggered against the brick wall and leaned there. She reached for the camphor in her blouse pocket and by touch wet her handkerchief. She had thought she would need that no more, and carried it now for new nurses.

The odor burned a dry clearness in her brain. Her torso seemed to arch out in physical revolt. She felt strained like a bow, drawn too tight by this will she had imposed on every thought and feeling and action. Every moment of her life was a crushing of something natural by this cruel will. *The Wades are a strong-willed people.* . . . She had heard that all her life. *We must sacrifice everything of ourselves to the Confederacy.* . . . Her mother had found sanctuary in that creed. But even a Wade, for her country, must reach a point beyond which the will would break.

The young nurse stirred in the alley. Automatically Mildred opened her eyes and moved toward her. Perhaps that point in her will had not yet been reached, but, as she held her handkerchief

to the girl's nostrils, she knew a tired and crushing loneliness. The nurse's blue eyes fluttered open. They fixed on Mildred and her face flushed, deeper than the color of her youthful glow.

"I'm so ashamed. I came here to help and I'm nothing but trouble."

"You must n't mind. We all went through it."

"But before you, Miss Wade . . . I know your family gave this warehouse as a hospital."

"We all try to do what we can. You go home and rest, and to-morrow —"

"I can't just try, Miss Wade. I wanted my sweetheart to go with the army, and he could n't go home and get over his first shock. He helped drive the Yankees out of Virginia. He's with the invasion now. Volunteer nursing is what *I* can do, and I've got to do it. I must. I must!"

There was desperation in her, not will. She did n't have to be a Wade to endure the hours in the whitewashed walls, the fly-infected wounds she would wash, the bloody clothes she would cut away from flesh. She had a lover to live for. Her hospital duties gave her life, not death.

"What is your name?" Mildred said quietly.

"Ann Bowers."

"Then, Miss Bowers, if you think you can stand it to-day, I'll see that you find some duties to break you in gradually." She put her hands under the girl's slender arms and helped her to her feet.

The nurse steadied herself and drew away. Her young face grew very serious and she looked at Mildred with passionate eyes. "I'll stand anything for the Confederacy."

They walked back down the alley. The wagon that carted the wounded had gone.

"I don't think we'll have any more wounded coming down from Manassas," Mildred said, "and that will make it easier on you." She held open the door. The two long rows of cots were quiet except for a screened one where a surgeon worked. Outside the screen a bloody stub of arm lay on the floor. "Down there,"

Mildred said quickly, pointing toward the end of the room, "is where you can work to-day." She got between Miss Bowers and the row in which the surgeon worked, as they walked back to the office.

The matron's records were piled on her father's desk and stacks of bandages reached up and half hid a framed woodcut of a sprawling, two-storied frame building with "1782" scrawled at the bottom. When she was a little girl, her father used to sit her on the desk and tell her about that building. It had been the first Wade tobacco warehouse in Richmond and he had seen it when he was a boy. He told her of his grandfather, who had it built.

When his grandfather first came to Richmond it had just been incorporated as a city, though it had scarcely a thousand residents. It had been badly burned in the spring by the British under Benedict Arnold, and was rebuilding. John Peter Wade's father, down at Kensington, had held that, with the Revolution over, the city would grow with the rebuilding, and it would be a fine place for a young man to grow up with the new country. John Peter Wade had thought it a dreadful hole. The red-clay streets were dusty in summer and bogs when it rained, and hogs wallowed in the gutters. Where the present warehouse stood had been west of the city, across Shockoe Creek, and at Fourteenth and Main a footbridge by the Old Market connected the city. Wagons forded the creek. Capitol Square, then "the publick square," was being built under the direction of Governor Tom Jefferson, who had moved the capitol to Richmond. The great life when John Peter Wade came to the city was discussing politics over a mug of ale in taverns, like the Bird-in-Hand, the Bell and the Eagle, and Gabriel Galt's City Tavern, where the United States Hotel now stood.

As Mildred used to listen, the life of the city that her great-grandfather had known seemed distant and unreal. Now it seemed no more remote or unreal than the years of her own life when she had visited her father at the warehouse. Then the sweet, rank smell of tobacco in the hogsheads, rolling on the floor where the cots now stood, mingled with the clean, masculine odor of her

father. Outside, her vision was horizoned by the tall buildings of the Gallego Flour Mills below which the muleteers on the banks of the canal steered boats into the Basin.

It had been a world of wonder, rich and complex and immense, planted solidly in time, and even as a child she had felt its power and importance. Now only the tangible objects surrounding her suggested that old life. Even to remember it was weakness. It was, she thought with bitterness, "unworthy of a Wade." She turned to the long table against the opposite wall. There were stacks of two-inch strips of white cloth that had been her mother's sheets and counterpanes, napkins and dimity petticoats.

"Do you know how to fold these into compresses?" she asked the girl.

"Yes, my mother showed me. She worked in the Spotswood Sewing Circle."

"Then you do that to-day. Don't touch those green and white chintz pieces. They're our old chair covers; we use them for bandages. After to-day you can start at changing sheets, fetching water, and keeping the flies off the badly wounded. Then you'll have a regular patient."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Wade. I'm coming out there to help to-day, you'll see."

"You're helping now." She hurried out, toward the screen where the surgeon worked. The matron held the pail. She was a sharp-featured spinster in her forties. She gave Mildred a sour look and stood up.

"You're late, Miss Wade. The surgeon's practically finished. The patient has already come out of the chloroform, and I've got to record those men who arrived."

"You'll find Miss Bowers in the office," Mildred said with controlled steadiness. "She'll have to work at bandages to-day."

"Another of your fine-lady fainters," she sniffed, and marched off with the bloody pail.

The surgeon glanced up and smiled wearily. He was very old. "If you'll just wash the wound, Miss Wade, I'll be back with the

bandages in a few minutes." He handed her a small tin pail filled with the red-oak-bark disinfectant which he prepared himself. He rose slowly and leaned against the window sill. "It's terribly hot to-day. . . . But we don't have to worry about the Yankees bursting in on us." He smiled again and moved slowly off.

Mildred wet the cloth and washed away the blood that clotted around the stitches in the stub. One trickle leaked through and dropped on her sleeve. The soldier shifted in the bed. She glanced at his Irish face and saw his eyes searching out of deep pain.

"Is it so bad, soldier?" she asked gently.

"No 'm, it ain't that. I can't bear for to see you spattered with blood from the likes of me."

Her first rush of emotion in many days filled her with an almost unbearable tenderness for the rough-faced man. "When you lose your blood for our country, I'm proud to have it on my dress."

The Irishman shook his head and all at once his eyes were wet. "That might be all right for you to say to these heah soldiers from the South, but I'm in a Richmond regiment and I know who you are."

The grip on her emotions had been broken and words spilled out before she was aware of thinking them. "In the First Virginia Regiment?"

"Yes 'm. The Bloody First."

"Do you know Brose Kirby?"

"Theah's a Sergeant Kirby in Company D—"

"You askin' 'bout Brose Kirby, Miss Wade?" A weak voice from the next bed startled her. She whirled and stared into sunken eyes shining above grayed but freshly shaven cheeks. He was the soldier who was shaved each day by the poor old woman whom Mildred remembered having seen that afternoon at the Fair Grounds camp, asking for Company D. Now, looking at the woman's son, Mildred suffered the same fear of that afternoon. The remembered emotions choked up so that she could n't speak.

"I know you, ma'am, because I used to work in this heah warehouse." The big-boned soldier grinned. "My name's Joe Fitchett.

Brose Kirby was my boss. Now he's my first sergeant—and the best top sergeant in the whole awmy."

"Thet's what this awmy needs is top sergeants," the Irishman said. "Too danged many West P'inters. They might make officuhs, but only God cain make top sergeants."

"Then God must've had our awmy in mind when He made Sergeant Kirby. Tell you what Brose did just befoh I was wounded at Second Manassas, ma'am."

He was speaking eagerly to her, as though he knew she wanted to hear of Brose as much as he wanted to talk. She could only nod, as she bathed the wound.

"We had a few conscripts in the company and they broke and one of 'em begun to run. Brose got in front of this heah conscript and said, 'Where the hell you think you runnin'?' Feller said, 'I ain't runnin', I'm jest skeered.' 'Then quit actin' like a baby,' Brose said. 'Wish I was a baby,' the conscript yelled, 'and a gal baby at that. Then I would n't never have got conscripted.'"

"Heh-heh-heh," the Irishman wheezed.

Joe Fitchett scowled. "Brose looked at the conscript a minit and then he stuck a big pistol in the feller's stomick. 'You git back theah and fight,' he said, cold-like, 'or you won't never wish nuthin' else.' That feller looked at Sergeant Kirby and he got back, I tell you. He told me later he was skeereder of the sergeant than he was of the Yankees. He was right, too. Brose jest as soon kill him as not."

Mildred had stared at him, mechanically bathing the amputated arm, while he talked. When he finished, she did n't speak. She feared that anything she said would betray her. It was the old fear that stirred up the memories of him, the *black 'un* whom she had prayed the war would swallow up. He had glared at her out of his hot black eyes just as he had at the conscript. No pistol was needed with her. It was his reckless laugh and the feel of his hands that made her weak and helpless. Swallow him up? She could see him, dark and hard, grinning at the idea. Nothing but death would swallow him up.

She heard steps on the bare floor and saw the old lady in her homemade unbleached cotton dress and the artificial cherries bobbing on her bonnet.

"Here's your mother," Mildred said, and turned quickly around to her patient. She was afraid even now that Joe Fitchett's mother would remember her, and all would know the thing in her that she was trying to kill. The wound was washed clean and ready for the bandage. The soldier eyed her curiously. She tried to smile reassuringly as she rose. At the next bed she heard Miss Bowers.

"Would you like to have your face washed?" she asked timidly.

"It's been washed fohteen times to-day," a young voice said patiently, "but if you want to wash it again, I don' mind."

Mildred hurried around the bed to the new nurse. Miss Bowers looked down at the hollow-cheeked young Carolinian with the mournful eyes. He was the victim of all the new nurses. Mildred whispered:—

"You get him a newspaper and read it. That's what they like."

Miss Bowers nodded and tears rimmed her eyes.

"Did the matron chase you out?" The girl tried to speak, but her lips trembled. "Now, don't mind her. I'll tell you what you do. To-night at home you boil some water over elderberries and the leaves and bring in the solution to-morrow. We use it as a disinfectant for flies and that'll make a good impression on her."

"Oh, you're so sweet," the girl cried.

Mildred smiled and moved down the aisle to the stairs. She could n't bear the eager eyes of that girl, who could stand anything for her love. Mildred had to endure for her love too, not so that it might live but that it must die. That was the reason for her will, why she could n't be through with it yet. She could n't be through with it until it had crushed out his image, every echo of longing and desire, until she became like the matron, a cog that existed only for the Confederacy. It was the Confederacy that destroyed her old life. Now it would have to destroy the love that had been born in the wreckage of her old life, and it must yield her a new life.

Upstairs the new patients had been placed in the beds near the door, where it was cooler. Already young women were gathered around them, helping the surgeons and the nurses. Groans and soothing voices ran together. *You'll be able to get around all right without. . . . It's jest that I want another crack at them Yanks. . . . Oh, Lord Jesus. . . . It won't be bad in a little while, soldier. . . . I don' mind foh myself. Hit's my wife 'n' chillun. . . . God have mercy. . . .*

At the far end of the room, Major Baylor Warwick was beckoning to her. She walked down the aisle. A fragile girl in a white muslin dress was sitting on the foot of a bed, reading from the *Southern Illustrated News* to a tawny-bearded giant puffing a pipe. Baylor, with his leg strapped in a harness suspended from the ceiling, was one of their most cheerful patients, though his pain must have been intense. Beside him stood the fifteen-year-old boy who had occupied the corner bed. He wore a neatly brushed and patched gray uniform with new buttons that a nurse had sewn on his jacket. His sallow face, with his large, grave eyes, was ageless, like a gnome's. A cloying sweet smell hung heavily in the odor of antiseptics and sweat. She saw flowers banked on the other side of the major's bed and she identified the odor of cologne. Baylor, grinning with his pale lips, pulled a champagne bottle from under the coverlet.

"My Richmond admirers have given me a shower and I've been trying to have Pete here accept a farewell party, but he insists that spiritus frumenti has not yet passed his lips and he intends to live out his few remaining years unpolluted."

Mildred smiled at the boy who stared so solemnly at her. "I didn't know you were leaving us so soon. The surgeon said September fifteenth."

"I'm well enough now, ma'am, and I want to be with the army on the invasion."

"You'd think," Baylor said, "a soldier like that would n't be afraid for his mother to smell his breath."

The boy turned to Baylor, not sure whether to resent him or not.

"Does n't your mother mind your going off with the army?" Mildred asked.

"No 'm, she said she'd rather see me dead than in the United States."

The grin left Baylor's face. "Well, you can tell your mother if you maintain this spirit you'll never be in the United States. We'll win European recognition on this invasion, and that means independence."

"I don't know about that, sir, but I know if we keep fighting them like we did at Manassas and Cedar Mountain, the Yanks will let us be."

"You're right, son. Mildred, in those fights our men ran out of ammunition and they ran down between charges and got it off dead Yanks. Finally they stood 'em off with bayonets and clubbed muskets and stones."

"Yes, ma'am. I saw a soldier in our company kill a Yank by hitting him on the head with a rock."

Mildred looked into that old child's face and thought of what all of them were enduring. The boy said good-bye to them then.

"You know," Baylor said, "I believe it was Pope's treatment of civilians that made our men fight like savages. You've never heard such tales as the people told us when we went through the country after Pope."

"We heard them down here . . . about his taking old men hostages and threatening to have them tried as spies if they wrote to their kin. . . ."

"That's nothing. He really made war on the people. McClellan's soldiers might've done a little stealing and burning and insulted a few ladies, but McClellan after all fought our army. This Pope was a barbarian. But he did one good thing. A lot of Virginians still thought the war was about secession, and they did n't particularly want to secede. Pope showed them it was the United States against us. They hate us, and if we don't win, we'll be without a country."

"And you think we will win now, Baylor?"

"If we keep invading and don't have to stand another siege. We were close to falling then."

"But I hear the home guards are at the entrenchments now."

He shrugged. "That's against an unlikely emergency. McClellan's army took after Lee when Lee left to hit Pope, and McClellan's army is following him into Maryland now. Think of Lee's audacity. Leaving a handful here on the chance that McClellan was so scared he would follow him. And here I am, trussed up like a Thanksgiving turkey, while Lee's on his first invasion! At least I've got to celebrate with my champagne. That captain next me must be bad off — they've put a screen around him. Maybe he'd like some."

She was glad to turn away so that Baylor would n't see her eyes. He did n't know yet that to-morrow they were going to amputate his leg. She moved the screen and started in. She stopped short. The shock came just as it had the first time, when she looked down at the still white face. The mouth had dropped open and glassy eyes stared at the ceiling. Untouched beside him was his dinner of corn pone and fat bacon. She backed out.

"I'll have to call the matron, Baylor. It's too late for champagne."

Baylor was silent a moment. "Better give him my flowers," he said.

The Indian summer heat of late September had lifted at last. Mildred, turning into her gate, felt some of her weariness lift with it. She paused in the dusk shadows of the yard and breathed in the fall. Autumn, not spring, was the season of renascence in Richmond. Spring was a refreshing tonic. Coming at the end of the winter social season and bringing Lent, it was associated with drives in the fresh green country, walks along the canal towpath, with dogwood and honeysuckle and blossoming gardens. But autumn awakened the soul after the sleep of summer. It meant dinner parties and balls, friends returning and visits, a horse galloping over a rolling field, hounds baying from the colored woods, and her father's exuberant voice ringing clear over the countryside, "Hock to 'em, beauties!" Autumn was expectant, an old dream reborn and new love.

In the hush of the lilac dusk she sensed it all, and she sensed too that this autumn must arouse only new strength and not desires. Strength was all she needed for the life this fall would bring: the treatment of her wounded father, who would be brought down from the Valley, where the army had retreated from Maryland; the work with soldiers from that futile invasion who were being carted by wagonloads into the hospital every day; the moral support of her mother, who now waited anxiously for her, fearful of the riffraff that roamed the dusk streets.

With a sigh, she relinquished the mood evoked by autumn. She walked slowly to the house. The will to endure was all she could ask. As she opened the front door, her mother's voice called from the parlor. She sounded excited, and Mildred hurried across the hall.

"News from Father?"

"Good news!" It was a heavy shout.

Entering the doorway, she saw Dennis standing by the wing chair in front of the fireplace. His face was filled out and ruddy, his uniform freshly pressed, and captain's gold braid on his left sleeve shone in the bright light. He looked handsome and strong standing there, and the scene was like the early days of the war. The huge room was opened for the first time since summer and everything was polished for the guests.

"Dennis says it's good news," her mother smiled. "Have you time to hear his letter before you dress for the dinner?"

"Oh, certainly. I shan't have to dress, anyway. I changed at the hospital." She offered her hand to Dennis. "And how are you?"

There was his old vigor in his answering smile. Only his eyes changed as he looked at her. "Like a two-year-old. I tell you commanding this boys' company of local troops has made a new man of me."

"I'm so glad you have them." She turned to her mother. "Has Father had the operation yet?"

"No, but that's what he writes about. See what you think." She unfolded the cheap yellow paper and shifted it under the direct

glow of the chandelier. "A young man is writing this for me," she read, "as I am too weak. They have been waiting for my strength to return before they probe for the ball, but as I seem to grow weaker, and the wound is painful, they will operate to-morrow. I expect to be home within the month and we can enjoy the beautiful autumn together while I recuperate. I am eager for that period of rest so that I may study to fit myself for a regimental officer. I believe I have an excellent opportunity for advancement as our division has suffered heavy casualties among officers. At Cedar Run we lost our Captain Morgan and Colonel Cunningham, our old captain, who handled our brigade so well at Cold Harbor. At Sharpsburg Company F had been reduced to three men and I acted as lieutenant-colonel for the 21st Regiment. Captain Page was acting colonel and when he was wounded the command would have devolved upon me, but I was shot right after him. The brigade finished that dreadful battle under the command of a lieutenant. I don't know what our poor Richmond Company F will do with three privates, doubtless reorganize. They should for they have distinguished themselves and the three men behaved gallantly at Sharpsburg."

Mrs. Wade glanced up. "Think of it, all those fine men who left Richmond and only three left. How can the United States think we'd ever want to be in the same country with them?"

"Go on, Mother, I want to hear about Father."

"All of Jackson's men," she read, "count Sharpsburg our greatest battle. We held the West Woods against three assaults and wore out three Union corps, and we could have taken the field if we had had one more division. As it was, every man on the field was engaged when a fresh Yankee force crossed Antietam Creek on our right flank. We would have been lost but for the timely arrival of A. P. Hill. He had marched his men from Harper's Ferry in the terrible heat, but he threw them into action with such speed and fury that the Yanks were driven back. But that was the last division in our whole army. But you can see how we fought them, for our retreat was unpursued. Many of our men are glad to be back

on the soft dirt Virginia roads, as they suffered badly walking barefoot and in thin soles over the hard Maryland roads. I don't have any feeling of failure about the invasion, though it was brief. We gave them a bad scare and captured arms at Harper's Ferry and much-needed supplies, and we've had them off Virginia soil for a while. Maryland itself was the real disappointment. Except for a few pro-Southern families, who treated us most cordially, the state is cool to our country. Unless we swing Kentucky I think the Confederacy will consist of its present states. They are enough, I believe, to win us our freedom."

"'Maryland, *their* Maryland,' the soldiers sang coming back," Dennis said.

Mrs. Wade glanced at him, without expression. She returned to the letter. "Fortunately my personal supplies are in fine shape, due to captures, and all I need is a pair of blankets for the winter, for which I am enclosing the money. I hear they are now twenty-five dollars a pair and we should buy them before they go up with winter approaching. You will be amused to know how I came by such wealth. I had intact that last ten dollars you sent me when we crossed the Potomac. Hearing there was bread soda near by and the regiment needing it badly for biscuits, I marched forth and bought a hundred-pound keg at six cents a pound. I toted the keg back and sold it at twenty-five cents a pound, thus earning the money I enclose. I reckon being in the Yankee country has created some trader instincts in me. I am so tired now I shall have to stop. When you receive this the operation will be over and I'll be waiting to come home. Please borrow all the available books on tactics and strategy. I am just beginning to comprehend the meaning of warfare. Until now, I've been a civilian fighting for my country. Now I'm going to be a soldier."

"Is that all?"

Her mother nodded. "What do you think?"

"He seems cheerful and it sounds exactly like him."

"But he says he's growing weaker."

"That's natural, Mrs. Wade, from loss of blood and not eating."

"Then why did they expect him to grow stronger, and this pain . . ."

"All stomach wounds are painful. I imagine they hoped his natural vitality would bring some return of strength. I'll wager he's straining at the bit now to be home."

She shook her head. "How soon will we know?"

"He'll send word by some friend coming to Richmond. Don't worry; if he was in bad shape, he would n't have shown such interest in things. You notice he said we gave them a bad scare. We did right enough; that's why Abe Lincoln made his proclamation freeing our slaves. With the cotton shortage in Europe, Lincoln is afraid we'll get European recognition now that we've shown ourselves strong enough to invade the United States."

Mrs. Wade nodded dully and returned to the letter. Mildred was pleased to see Dennis more at peace. Since the army had been away and the Locals were on constant duty at the breastworks, his physical fitness had returned, and with it a new sense of importance. He seemed to have lost his bitter shame, his sense of impotence. She wanted to encourage him.

"Don't you think our position will be weakened," she asked, "with our army falling back into Virginia?"

"Not the way things are going in Kentucky. You heard that Forrest captured Murfreesboro and Bragg won at Munfordville? And Kirby Smith is threatening Cincinnati. No, Lincoln just had to make this appear a war over slavery to try and prevent us getting recognition."

"But if everybody in the world hates slavery so much, might n't his proclamation make it seem that the Union is fighting to free slaves, and actually prevent recognition?"

"Not if we keep winning. That's all that counts. He can't free my slaves from Washington, can he? He has nothing to do with us. Queen Victoria might as well order the machines in the North to be abolished because those states once belonged to England. Anyway, the statesmen in Europe must know this proclamation is merely a political move. Why, Lincoln promised not to interfere

with slavery, admitted he had no right. In Europe, they'll know this is just dirty politics. Let us keep winning—you'll see."

Mrs. Wade laid the letter aside. "I'd like to get some bleached cotton while it's only a dollar a yard, and sew some new shirts for Dinny."

"Mother, I think we'd better concentrate on food first, to build him up. With flour at sixteen dollars a barrel and bacon a dollar a pound, it'll take all we can scrape to buy enough for us all to eat."

"That's right, and salt is out of sight."

"And going higher," Dennis said, "unless the government steps in. Something else to be grateful to the blockade for."

"They seem to think the more they make us suffer, the more we'll want to return to the Union." Her delicate face set in its new, grim mask that was so unnatural for her. "As for me, the Butlers and Popes can do their worst in New Orleans and Virginia, but I'll never return. Dinny said they hate us and they do. They've made our lives hateful. But I don't care. I'll starve, I'll stand anything, to see us free of them."

When Mrs. Wade talked like that, Mildred could n't answer her. Since her hatred of the war for what it did to her personally had grown into a hatred of the United States for what it had done to her family and Virginia, hardness had grown with it. Sometimes Mildred suspected her hard hate was a retreat, supplanting her lost security. She held herself constantly taut, with set features, as though she feared that to let go for a moment would be to lose it. In the silence, the doorbell tinkled faintly back in the house.

"Oh, I'd forgotten the guests." Mrs. Wade tried to compose herself. "I'd feel more like entertaining if I knew about Dinny, but everybody says this is what we can do—make the soldiers at home forget the war." She ruffled out her crinoline over the sofa and fixed a smile on her lips.

John silently passed the door. They heard his low voice in the hall, then the door closed. Dennis arose, jerked down his jacket,

and straightened his empty sleeve. Several moments passed. Mildred wondered who could be taking so long. Then John moved in the doorway. He just stood there, alone, holding an empty canvas sack in front of him. Straps from the sack hung down. Mildred read "US" in faded letters on the canvas. Then something in the negro's face stiffened her in the chair and her mother cried:—

"What is it, John?"

John turned his eyes to her, without speaking. He moved slowly into the room. It seemed that he kept on walking across the rug, staring straight ahead. There was no expression on his black face, but because of his silence, Mildred stood up. She felt hollow inside. John stopped in front of Mrs. Wade. Her eyes opened wide and she tried to speak. He laid the canvas on her lap. It was a haversack. John gulped.

"Sol-juh at the doh, said he was a friend of Mr. Dinwiddie's. . . . He brought this heah foh you-all from—from Mr. Dinwiddie . . ."

Mrs. Wade slowly lowered her gaze to the haversack. Her fingers fluttered over the flap. It fell forward. A dried apple dropped out and rolled on the floor.

Mildred stared at the dried apple as though she had never seen one before. *Fortunately my personal supplies are in fine shape.* . . . The haversack slid off her mother's knees and out on the floor spilled grains of corn among coarse socks, a stub of pencil in the opened leaves of a dirty Bible, a chipped razor, and, shining with a dull steady glow, a gold hunting-case watch. The last time she saw that watch, her father had taken it out of his bright new uniform while they waited at the depot and her mother made a last examination of his knapsack. She saw again the knapsack, strapped firmly to his back, opened to reveal neat compartments containing white paper and a full toilet set, pen and ink, coils of linen collars and cuffs, white gloves, and a round mirror case from Paris. That imported knapsack seemed now to lay mistily over his scattered belongings. Then her mother blotted it out. She was lying, very still, across the canvas haversack, one arm outstretched

toward the dried apple. Mildred heard someone screaming. Then she was being shaken.

"Mildred. Mildred!" That was Dennis. His hand was on her. "You must n't. We've got to look after your mother. Do you hear me?"

Her eyes focused as though they had been blurred. John was lifting her mother. His face was wet, but hers was as dry as death. He placed her tenderly on the sofa.

"I'll get my camphor." Her voice sounded faint and unnatural. The house seemed bare and empty as she went upstairs. There was a vagueness about her room. She took the camphor bottle out of the bureau and that seemed a silly thing to be doing. A shriek rose from downstairs. Her head cleared, like emerging from a nightmare. Edmonia was shrieking and Delphy began to wail. Mildred ran downstairs with the camphor.

John and Dennis were bathing her mother's wrists and forehead. Her face was paper white. Her eyes stared glassily at the ceiling. Mildred stooped over and held the camphor to her. She turned to the wall. John sighed. "She's coming out of it," Dennis whispered. Mildred took her head gently. Her mother tried to pull away. Mildred held her. Rigid, her mother suffered the odor. She gasped for breath, straining upward, and then she fell back. Color touched her cheeks. She began to breathe deeply.

"Mother."

She looked at them. Her eyes were clear but expressionless. While they stared at her, the doorbell tinkled faintly. John straightened.

"I'll go," Dennis said, "and tell them the dinner is postponed."

As he turned, Mrs. Wade's white hand fluttered out, tugged feebly at his empty sleeve. She shook her head. An expression lit her eyes, a scary, child-like determination.

"Let them in. . . . Take them to the upstairs living-room. . . . I'll join you—in a little while. . . . We must all do—what we can. . . ."

CHAPTER XIV

“Men of the First Virginia regiment — you have on so many hard-fought fields gained the name of the ‘Bloody First’ — to-day your country calls on you again to stand between her and her enemy, and I know you will do your duty.” — *Brigadier General Kemper to the First Virginia Regiment, of his brigade, as they moved into action at Marye’s Heights, in the Battle of Fredericksburg, December 13, 1862*

Two soldiers in frayed, patched overcoats lifted the stretcher out of the ambulance. The gaunt horses drooped in the biting wind. Elizabeth stood in the vestibule with her mother and father and Granny, and watched the dirty soldiers move the stretcher through the gate. The head of the stretcher bumped the gatepost. Her mother moaned. Her eyes were wide and she was breathing hard. Her effort at control was painful to see. Granny stared with bright intentness. Mr. Kirby was silently crying.

The soldiers nodded and moved sidewise up the wooden steps. Brose’s battered black slouch hat had slipped back on his head and the December wind ruffled his dark hair. His face seemed to be in a shadow. His full lips were parted. They were gray. His heavy brows cast a shadow like a dark socket over his closed eyes. One of the soldiers stumbled getting on the porch.

“Please be careful,” Mr. Kirby whispered.

“Yes, suh.”

Elizabeth stood close to her father as they moved aside on the narrow porch. The soldiers walked with slow steps through the door. Marie held it open. She stared down at the still figure, drop-jawed in awe, the whites of her eyes glaring.

“Ah, Mistuh Brose, howcome you let ’em do thet to you?”

"Keep quiet, Marie," Mrs. Kirby said.

They followed the stretcher into the hall and closed the door. Elizabeth was trembling. She had said she would n't be scared. She had n't known how much she loved her brother. There was something awful about seeing him lie helpless. She followed them up the stairs. The carpet treads were worn and she hoped the soldiers would n't catch their toes. Her father said:—

"Is—is he very bad off?"

"It's the trip, suh, done him in. He's lost a lot of blood. I don't see how he stood it."

"I tell you, you can't kill a Fitzhugh," Granny said reedily.

"Did they get the ball out of his chest?" her father asked.

"Yes, suh. It just missed his lung."

Marie had gone ahead and she held open the door to his room. She still stared at Brose in awe. The sheet was turned back on the bed and the soldiers laid him down quietly.

"Don't move him. If his wound opens again, he's a goner."

Her mother ran to him then. She took the dusty black hat off his head and smoothed back his hair. She began to cry painfully. There was hardly any sound. Her breath caught and choked and a broken sigh gasped out. The soldiers looked at Elizabeth and then at her father. She knew she should say something. She was too scared. The soldiers nodded and stepped quietly out of the room. Then her father went to unlace Brose's shoes. Her mother waved him away. She moved along the bed on her knees and pulled at the strings. They were heavy, dirty shoes with thick, muddy soles. When the first one came off, Marie began to cry. All his toes were bare. Mrs. Kirby pulled off the other shoe. That sock was worse. She pulled the cover up and tucked it under his chin. Brose had not moved. Mr. Kirby said:—

"Where's that load of coal, Marie?"

"I could n't get it, Mistuh Charles. The money warn't 'nuff."

"But I gave you eight dollars for just a load."

"Hit's gone up, Mistuh Charles."

"But we've got to have a fire up here. He'll freeze to death."

"No . . . I won't." His lids raised and his black eyes stared out of grayed, sunken sockets.

"Brose! Oh, Brose . . . Oh, my poor boy!" His mother started sobbing and stroking his forehead.

Charles Kirby went timidly to the bed. "How do you feel, son?"

Brose grinned. When she saw his gray lips move over his crooked teeth, Elizabeth started to cry too.

"Everybody's crying but Granny," he said. His voice was a drawn, thin croak. "It's nice here . . . in a bed. . . . I'll be warmer than I've been in a month."

"Don't talk, son," his father said.

"Spend the eight dollars for coffee and — you have n't got any real coffee, I reckon?" Mr. Kirby shook his head. His face was wet. "Let's have some real coffee for Christmas. Send Paul some."

"Paul's coming home for Christmas, son."

"Then let's have a real Christmas. Coffee with sugar in it and butter — butter for Marie's batter bread."

Marie's weeping rose into a wail. "Don't have butter no moh, Mistuh Brose, sence it's been two dollar a pound. No sugar neither."

"That's all right," Charles Kirby said. "We'll get the coffee somehow, but please don't talk any more."

"Anyway, don't get any coal for me. I won't ever need a fire . . . after Fredericksburg. God, it was cold."

"Don't think of that now, Brose," his mother said. "You're home now."

Brose turned his head a little, to look at his mother. "You smell sweet. What you got on?"

"Nothing, son. I've just washed, that's all."

"With soap?"

"Yes, son."

"Will you get me a piece of soap to wash with . . . to-morrow?"

Elizabeth could n't control herself any longer. There was n't a full cake in the house.

"Little sister," he said, "don't be scared."

"I—I'm not scared, Brose."

"You want somp'n hot foh to drink, Mistuh Brose?"

"No, Marie. I don't want anything. I'm a little sleepy."

"Close your eyes, son."

His eyes opened wider for a second and a defiant glare came into them. He looked at them in some silent bitter protest. He did n't look helpless any more. He looked like a captured hawk.

Two days before Christmas his mother and father brought him downstairs. Elizabeth had piled pillows on the sofa and she waited with a blanket to spread over him. The parlor was cozy and looked like Christmas. The grate was burning low and, though it was the first time they had had a fire in here this year, the chill was off the room. Marie had gathered up the chips in the woodshed and they had poured a few drops of kerosene on an old kitchen chair that Mr. Kirby had broken into pieces. The hot blaze had warmed the room enough for the grate fire to hold the heat. Sprigs of cedar and pine that Elizabeth and her father had gathered in the woods near Seven Pines covered the mantel, and some old red paper they had found draped the candlesticks. Their homemade candles looked fine, and were burning, too. She had melted beeswax and rosin together and run through it four threads of slack-twisted cotton. The grate and the candle gave the only light and it threw a soft yellow glow in the room, hiding the worn carpet and curtains. Outside snow fell.

She heard him on the stairs and she tensed with eagerness to see him in his new jacket. It was their Christmas present. They had bought the material and had Mrs. Fitchett make it. Her mother had sewed on the Confederate buttons from his old jacket and the three slim angles and diamond of his first-sergeant's chevrons. With the good pieces of his old jacket they had sewed a double patch in the seat of his trousers and Marie had scrubbed them clean and pressed them. With stove blacking, she had brought a dull shine to his heavy shoes.

The door opened and he stood there, between father and mother, looking at the room. He was freshly shaved and his long, loose hair was brushed back. In his new uniform, with the shining buttons and polished shoes, you would never know he was wounded. Then he gave a slow grin, which lighted his black eyes, and Elizabeth's quick pride in him was stifled. While he lay in bed she had grown closer to her brother than ever in her life. Now, as he moved into the room, dark and rugged, he was the stranger he had always been to her. All her greetings froze on her lips and she watched him with a set smile, while sudden sadness rushed over her.

They sat him down on the sofa and lifted his legs up. The heavy shoes gleamed dully in the firelight.

"How'd you get such fine shoes, Brose?" his father asked. "I thought our supply department was worthless."

"The United States is our supply department. I got these shoes off a dead Yankee."

Elizabeth's hands clutched the blanket. She felt her father go rigid. Her mother grew a little pale. Then, in the sudden pause, she took the blanket from Elizabeth's nerveless fingers and drew it over him. None of them looked at the shoes.

"Don't look like that," he said. "I walked barefooted to Fredericksburg and so did thousands of other men with Longstreet. Half our men would be naked but for the Yankees, and we get muskets and cannon from them too."

Mr. Kirby cleared his throat. "I understand, son," he said apologetically, "but you and Paul are always writing about how you get food and clothes and shelter. We'd like to know something about your battles. Why don't you tell us that?"

"The battles only last a short time. We're cold and hungry all the time. When is Paul coming?"

"We're expecting him now, any minute. But, Brose, you don't know how anxious we are to learn just what actually happens. Your mother and I try to picture you, so we can see what you're doing in a battle."

"Well, you can imagine I'm behind a fence or a ditch or something like that, and I wait there for Yanks to run toward me, or I get out and run toward them. Sometimes we just stay there and shoot."

Judy Kirby finished tucking in the blanket and stood up. Her mouth was tight, but her eyes were luminous with suppressed emotion.

"But the battle as a whole," her husband said hastily, "don't you see something of that?"

"All we see are the few men in front of us, in woods or fields or, like at Fredericksburg, on a hill. We knew Burnside had 150,000 and we had hardly half that, but we had confidence in the position General Lee had given us."

"But I should think you'd have seen the whole field at Fredericksburg. Weren't you on top of the hill that overlooks the town?"

"We were on top but back, at first, held in reserve. We heard the firing and every now and then a shell would burst near us, and several men in the regiment were wounded. Earlier, Stonewall Jackson had ridden by all dressed up in a new coat that Jeb Stuart had given him. It was the most beautiful thing you ever saw, all shiny facings and braid. We had yelled at him and he gave a foolish grin. So during most of the battle, we were just talking about Old Jack being worried over his finery and not getting down to work."

"How about when you were ordered over the hill?"

"The smoke was so thick I could n't see anything but the slope in front of me. We went down to a sunken road and dropped in that. Some men from another outfit were there, playing poker. Below the road, on the side of the hill, I heard wounded Yanks groaning and praying, and the soldiers told us the Yankee dead were piled up like cordwood. Then somebody yelled, 'Here they come,' and I stuck my musket over the top of the wall and saw a lot of them coming up the hill. The hill was covered with bodies. I started shooting. Then something that felt like a rock hit me in the chest and that's all I remember."

The three of them stood there, staring at him, Elizabeth at his

feet, mother at his head, and father by his side. Mrs. Kirby said in a low voice:—

“When did you come to, son?”

“At night, back of the lines. People were groaning all around me. I heard that we had driven them back with heavy losses and there was talk of a counterattack. I heard that General Maxcy Gregg had been killed, too. You remember him, Elizabeth? He was leading the First South Carolina Regiment we saw parading that day, with Paul and Chester.”

She nodded. That afternoon surged back over her, when all the uniforms were bright and new, and they all thought the war would be a few battles.

“Then you never saw anything of the Fredericksburg people being forced out of their homes, and the looting of the town?”

“Not a thing. I wondered where all the people did go, because the firing was right over the town and a lot of the houses were ruined.”

“A lot of them came here,” Mr. Kirby said. “Poor Uncle Virginius has his house full of them. That’s the only way he’s keeping his family alive, from the little money he’s getting as board from some of them. Others can’t pay anything. They’re wiped out entirely. We fed several families ourselves.”

“Yes,” his wife said, “and I reckon we’ll have a lot more when this Milroy gets through with the western part of Virginia.”

“What’s that?” Brose moved his right arm out of the blanket.

“He assesses people for so many thousand dollars for damage done to the United States, and if they don’t pay he burns their homes. He’s worse than ‘Beast’ Butler in New Orleans. I don’t see why we don’t retaliate. We could starve their soldiers here in Libby Prison, for damage done to our property, and give the food to our own poor.”

“If General Lee had n’t held us back on our invasion we could’ve given them a taste of their own medicine then. They’d call off their dogs soon enough if we did. Now we’ll have to go back to defending Richmond again.”

"We've got niggers working on fortifications now." Mrs. Kirby's face darkened and her mouth drew down. Elizabeth stiffened against her outburst, but Charles Kirby spoke quickly.

"Has the army been helped by the new conscripts, son?"

"Hardly any." He stirred restlessly. His mother patted him. "We don't need new men so much as we need to consolidate those we've got and follow up our victories. There's too much of this idea of defense. Look at that fool Bragg in Kentucky. Had the Yanks licked and then he spent a week at the inauguration of a Confederate governor and let Buell take Louisville. Now he's fallen back to Tennessee and talks of the supplies he's captured. Supplies are not going to do anything but prolong the war. If we want our freedom, we've got to hurt *them*. Every soldier knows that, but Davis thinks they'll quit if we keep driving them back, show them we can defend ourselves."

"There won't be anything here to defend except the profiteers, if things keep up like this," his father said. "We don't even pay Marie any wages now. She wanted to stay with us. What we'll do when our clothes wear out, the Lord only knows."

"How're things at the store?"

Judy Kirby shook her head at her husband, but he did n't see. His tired face broke in a shy smile and for a moment his dull eyes lit.

"Well, by discovering various drug substitutes, I've managed to keep it above water and that's all. You can't get credit any more, you know, and drugs are out of sight at cash. Kent, Paine quoted me quinine at twenty-two dollars an ounce and sixteen dollars for oil peppermint. But by browsing in the woods I've found all sorts of substitutes I can fix up. Dogwood makes excellent camomile, for instance, and hops and motherwort make laudanum. Wild senna will do for senna, cotton root for ergot, dandelion, butterfly weed, and pleurisy root for calomel, and I have to make corks out of corncobs and tupelo wood and —"

"Oh, Brose does n't want to hear all that, Charles."

"Well," he said with a resigned firmness, "I don't see how I

can keep on if stuff I have to buy goes any higher. Stores are being sold right and left. My old friends' stores are all in the hands of strangers and — ”

“Well, even if we lose the store, we'll keep going. I won't give in if we have to sell the house to strangers and live in the woodshed.”

The sliding doors creaked and Granny eased in.

“We'll have to burn the woodshed to keep warm,” she said, “if wood gets any higher. It's sixteen dollars a cord now, and I'm frozen half the time in this house. This is going to be a hard winter.”

“I'll send you down some Yankees to burn, Granny,” Brose said. “How'd you like that?”

“Humph.” She closed the door behind her. “You're well, all right, boy. Must be the home cooking you're getting. We'll send it to you all the time and then you won't get shot trying to take it from the Yankees.”

“Can't send it, Granny. That's the trouble now. There is food in the South, but the transportation does n't work.”

The words recalled Chester's last letter and again Elizabeth was filled with the thought of him, and for the first time she could speak.

“Chester says that with all the horses they captured on their raid into Pennsylvania there are n't enough for the wagons, and not enough forage even for those horses they have.”

“So you still hear from Chester?” Brose moved his head and his eyes stared full at her. “How is he?”

“He's a scout, you know.” Brose nodded. “He's going to be a captain.”

“Good for him. Is he as serious as ever?”

Elizabeth felt all their eyes on her and the old confusion returned, heating her cheeks. She tried to speak and her mother said sharply:—

“You'd think the whole war was on his shoulders and — ”

The bell tinkled.

“There's Paul!” Elizabeth whirled to the door in relief at

escaping. The unheated hall cooled her cheeks. The thought of seeing her old playmate, the sweet one, swept clear the embarrassment. She jerked open the front door and felt elated at the rush of snow-chilled wind.

A small figure, muffled in furs, stood there in the snowy dusk.

"Miss Kirby?" The voice was low and soft.

"Yes . . . yes . . ." Elizabeth faltered and moved back into the hall.

The muffled figure stepped up on the threshold into the reflected light from the open parlor door. Elizabeth saw a lovely white face, wearing a slightly arrogant smile. Red expectant lips were parted and there was a glow behind her smoky gray eyes.

"Miss — Miss Wade!" Elizabeth heard her own voice loud, like a cry. The sudden hush in the parlor answered her.

"Yes," came the cool tones, "I heard your brother was wounded. I wanted to bring him a little present."

"Yes. Yes, he is. Won't you come in? He just came downstairs."

Elizabeth backed into the parlor doorway; then she remembered and stopped. She huddled against the doorjamb and watched the slender girl move easily into the room, still smiling with that touch of arrogance. Elizabeth turned after her. Her mother and father and Granny were standing, staring. Brose was propped up on one elbow. His black eyes were glaring hotly.

"This — this is Miss Wade," Elizabeth said.

CHAPTER XV

"NEWS FROM THE NORTH (*The New York Herald*): Within a few weeks we may anticipate the occupation of the Rebel capital. . . . With the fall of Richmond, involving the defeat and demoralization of the main army of Jeff. Davis, the rebellion in the East will be substantially suppressed. . . ."
— *Richmond Whig*, December 1862

Mildred watched Mr. Kirby close the sliding doors on his family. He alone had been pleasant during her ordeal of trying to talk with them all. It was he who finally, sensing her embarrassment, had suggested that they leave. The kindness with which he had treated her was instinct in his sad, sweet face. He was a very tired man. Elizabeth was his child. She had wanted to be kind too, but she had hardly been able to speak. The poor thing was all unstrung, obviously made nervous by Mrs. Kirby's hostility. Brose was his mother's son: the same high cheekbones, the black eyes, the dark passion. Mrs. Kirby had seemed almost to hate her, and she had blocked all Mildred's efforts at conversation. The grandmother was a curious one. She had stared steadily at Mildred the whole time, saying never a word. She had been the last to leave. Then, backing through the doors, she had muttered something.

Mildred turned to Brose. He lay flat on his back, one arm outside the blanket, and he looked up at her with inscrutable eyes. The blood that flushed his skin when she entered had receded, leaving his color a flat brown. His expression was equally flat. She felt her first touch of fear. While his family had been in the room, she had anxiously waited for them to leave, so she could

go to him. She had imagined she would rush into his arms, as she had dreamed so often. Now she felt uncertain before this dark silent man covered with a blanket, and his feelings covered too, by something hard and unyielding. She must say something.

"That old lady . . . your grandmother?" He nodded. "What did she say as she went out?"

"I don't know, but probably something about anyone who has anything to do with a Fitzhugh being crazy. She thinks that."

"Fitzhugh?"

"She married a Fitzhugh," he said flatly. His voice was almost harsh. "He was my grandfather."

"She's right," Mildred laughed shakily. "I mean, about being crazy."

"Why did you come here?"

His harshness made her feel like an intruder, as his family had. She steadied against her shakiness, forced herself to speak. "It's hard to tell you, like this. I—I had thought you would be glad to see me."

"Only a fool is glad to be hurt."

"I didn't come to hurt you, Brose. I came because, that night before Seven Pines, you said you would never come to me again. And . . . and I wanted to see you."

"You think because I'm wounded—"

"No, no!" Her words rushed out. "You know better than that."

He just stared at her, still hard and unyielding, and then he shifted on the couch, and his face turned away from her, as if impatient. She saw the loose hair, now neatly brushed, grown long on the back of his neck, just as she had first seen him on that long-ago Secession Night. The mood of that night swept through her, like a wave of his own Rebel line. She faltered toward the couch.

"Oh, Brose, must you be so hard with me now? It's been hard enough all along, God knows, without you doing this to me."

His eyes, lit with black heat, turned quickly to her. The candle-light threw a glow on his face. She had never seen him so close

and clear. The marks of his suffering showed in tiny lines around his mouth and eyes, and his nostrils were a little pinched.

"You would n't come here . . . like this . . ." his voice was thick and halting . . . "just because you're sorry?"

"I'm here, like this, because I love you." She dropped on her knees beside him and felt his free arm close around her. She had no more strength of her own and her body yielded against his chest, as he turned over toward her. His mouth bruised her own. She closed her eyes.

"Oh, my darling, I've waited so long for you to kiss me like that."

He fell back, drawing in breath, and he looked at her as though he had never seen her before. In the candlelight his face was dark now, as she remembered it.

"You know what I call you to myself?" she said. "My black 'un."

"I reckon that's right . . . about some things."

"About me?" She smiled.

"I don't know what I am with you. I'd like to know why you came here."

Her hands released him and she slid to sit, curled up, on the floor. She rested her chin on his arm. His face was very close.

"You know about Father?"

"I heard it in camp. I'm sorry for you and your mother."

"Not for him?"

He was silent a moment. "I should be, because he was a fine man to work for, but I can't forget that he kept you from seeing me. He thought I was n't good enough."

"Not as you mean it, Brose. He thought you were bad, and you are." She felt the softness of her smile all through her. "He was afraid you would hurt me."

His gaze left her and he stared at the ceiling. "Maybe he was right," he said slowly, almost to himself. "Maybe I would have."

"*Would* have!" She rose to her knees. "What do you mean?"

"I don't know. I reckon it's this wound." Unexpectedly he

grinned at her, showing his crooked teeth. "Maybe it's softened me, I don't know."

She almost laughed in relief. Her hands cupped his face. "Don't ever let anything soften you. I could n't bear it."

He moved his face out of her hands. "I don't understand you, Mildred. I can't help the feeling that it has something to do with my wound."

"I'll tell you what it has to do with your wound. For months, for years it seems, I've lived in dread that I would see your name on a death list. When I heard that you were wounded, I was never so frightened in my life. I knew then, in my soul, what you meant about us having only to-day. I thought that if you had died there would be nothing left for me but a promise to a dead man."

"What promise?"

"I promised my father that as long as he lived I would never see you."

The words hung in the silence of the candlelit room and they became more than words. Mildred felt, close in this homey little parlor, the spirit of Dinwiddie Wade. She felt it as he was in the year of his death, when he knew no more joy in his hours, no more pleasures in his body, but only the fate of his country and the mood and minutiae of soldiering.

"The dead can go on living," Brose said, and he must have felt it too.

"I thought that too, Brose, until you were wounded. Now I know that we ourselves are too close to death to want to know the dead. It was different when people's lives went on in security. Then they were bound to family ties and duties that stretched back into the past. Now we have no past. As you said, we have only to-day."

He did n't answer, and his dark look seemed like an appraisal.

"Don't think me heartless!" All the long-silenced emotions found voice now. "If you only knew what I went through, long before you were wounded, trying to make up my mind. Down in the

hospital I saw young men die every day, with letters in their pockets from girls who had believed we had forever. I could n't believe it was right for me to be held to that promise. I did n't believe my father had understood how much you meant to me. He thought he protected me, but he had n't. He had made my life miserable. Then, when you were wounded, I knew if you had died my life would have died too. All last fall I tried to live only for the Confederacy, as though you had never existed. I was like a machine. I was like a dead person. If you had been killed, I never would have had any life again. I fought against it, but my father's words kept coming back: 'as long as he lived.' It might sound mean, but it seemed like fate."

His hand closed over hers. "It does n't sound mean, but to cut yourself off from everything is a lot. Somehow I can't see you like that, living from day to day . . ."

"But, Brose, just a year ago you told me that to-day was all I had, that nothing would ever be the same. You remember, it was snowing just as it is now."

"I remember, but I've done a lot of thinking in the past year."

"So have I, and I've done a lot of living, too. I tried to recapture my old life and I tried to build a new one, and I know there is n't anything for me but you. I've learned what you said last year, that there is n't anything sure for any of us. We don't even know what will become of Virginia, or Richmond. We only have what we've got, here and now."

"And do you know what you've got in me?"

"My black 'un." She smiled.

He did n't answer. He continued to look at her in his serious scrutiny.

"Oh, my darling," she cried, "I've got what I want." Then she jumped up and fumbled in her cloak. "I've brought you a present. Don't open until Christmas Day, but I'll tell you what's in it—a lovely box of linen note paper and envelopes. I thought your first letters to me should be elegant, so I can keep them forever, and they won't fall apart like our Confederate paper."

"I've never written any letters except to the family since I've been in the army."

"You'll do lots of things now you never did before."

"Not me. I will write you though, because you can't be coming here."

She placed the parcel on the mantel and sat on the floor beside him, her fingers entwined in his. "Brose, I love you."

"I love you, Mildred."

"You've never said it like that before. Now, nothing can hurt us. Even the Yankees can't take that away."

"Yanks can't take anything away. We'll be free of them by next year."

"Then we'll begin our life together in our new country."

"It'll be a funny life for you, wife of a warehouse clerk."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, we have n't got the warehouse any more. We've been renting it to a man named Milton Duke since the wounded left. But you're a soldier now!"

"Yes, God help me, and when will I be anything else?"

"I would n't care, if I could march along with you, Brose, and share everything —"

"The sweat."

"I'd love it."

"The chiggers and lice."

"I'd keep you clean." Her fingers tightened around his and she lifted her face. "Oh, Brose, we will win, so we can be together like this always."

The long-remembered light flared in his eyes and his dark face seemed to bear down on hers.

"Kiss me, Brose," she whispered, and she knew that for such a blending of desire she had waited all her days.

January 1863

CHAPTER XVI

"A review of our history during the two years of our national existence . . . you will perceive that . . . the neutral nations of Europe have pursued a policy which, nominally impartial, has been practically most favorable to our enemies and most detrimental to us." — *President Davis to the Third Session of the Senate and House of Representatives of the Confederacy, Richmond, January 12, 1863*

In the shadow of the square red brick house where Chief Justice John Marshall had lived stood the stable of the old Blackwell home. It was gray brick and two-storied. The upper floor was for slaves, but they had gone with the Blackwells and the rooms were empty and dark. In the front part of the ground floor two horses were stalled, and in the rear part stood a closed carriage and a buggy. Between the two ground-floor sections ran a narrow alley, walled and roofed, with a barred door at each end.

Behind the door that opened on the black street, Milton Duke watched a tall man approach from Clay Street. The man was muffled in a huge cape which flapped in front of his face. When he reached the stable he glanced quickly about the street and then turned to the heavy door. The cape flapped down from his face. Milton Duke saw the bold beauty of it, and the eyes bright and quick under arched brows. He swung back the door. The muffled figure glided in and was swallowed up in the pitch blackness of the alley.

No word was spoken. Milton bolted the door and slid along one wall to the opposite end of the alley and held open that door.

The tall man moved gracefully through the opening and stood blocked out against the night sky as he surveyed the winter garden. Milton Duke barred the door and hurried, stooped, through the gray brush to the basement entrance under the columned, two-storied balcony.

Again in pitch blackness he bolted the door and led the way to stairs that wound upward into a butler's pantry, through an empty dining room, into a dimly lit library. Red velvet curtains were pulled over tall windows. Double doors into the drawing-room were closed. A single lamp burned on a corner table. Beside the lamp a cut-glass decanter of brandy stood on a tray with one glass beside it.

Milton Duke studied the boldly beautiful face of his guest. The man was looking with admiration at the pine-paneled, high-vaulted room. Then suddenly the bright, clever eyes flashed on Milton Duke, who quickly gestured toward the decanter.

"For you," he said. He turned his back, walked to the fireplace, and put a chunk of slate coal on the low fire. The fellow made him uneasy. He was too damned sure. But he was a power now himself. He was no longer a poor wholesaler, living by hard bargains. This man must be made to feel the weight of him. He fixed a scowl on his face and turned around.

The man had divested himself of the greatcoat. It lay sprawled across the love seat, with the stovepipe hat atop it, looking, in the shadows, much like a dead man. He wore a handsomely tailored black broadcloth suit, silk lined, and Milton Duke appraised the goods to be first class. A flowered neckpiece flowed out of a low, spread collar. He was pouring a glassful of brandy. As he stood there against the light, his shadow on the wall was gigantic. Duke tightened his lips against the man's effect on him. He watched him down the brandy at a gulp and pour another. Then the tall man turned slowly, glancing over the room.

"A beautiful home," he said in a deep, rich voice. "Truly magnificent." He sipped of his brandy. "Æsthetically it is regrettable that this grandeur, this artistry of human background, has

been perverted from its original purposes. Seeing that balcony as we entered, I suffered a stab of sorrow at realizing that no beautiful women would grace it for me, but that I must skulk ignominiously beneath it. What has become of the Blackwells?"

"The women 'n' children are boardin' with a feller by name of Virginius Kirby. Major Blackwell was killed at Sharpsburg. Finish your drink, Adair, and let's git down to business."

"I never finish my drink. Proceed."

"It makes me fidgety to talk business to a feller while he's drinkin'. Besides, that brandy costs fifty dollar a gallon, whole-sale."

There was ice in Adair's smile. "Then I regret that you must be nervous during our brief interview." Standing with his long legs braced, he lifted the glass as for a toast.

"Dammit, man," Duke said pettishly, "quit actin' like you was on a stage. This is dangerous. We'd git hung if we got caught here togethuh."

"Did you never hear that all life is a stage and we but players on it? We shall be hanged none the less high for playing our parts ignobly." He sipped his brandy and his eyes smiled mockingly.

For a moment Milton Duke had doubts of this man. He might be a spy to entrap him. He had met him only once, when they agreed on this meeting, but he had word that Adair was trustworthy. He wet his lips.

"Wal," he muttered, "anyway, you can quit makin' them speeches and git down to business. It ain't safe for you to be here."

"I can but reiterate, proceed."

The tone annoyed Duke and he started to tell him to get out. Then he noticed that those bright, clever eyes were wary, and he choked back the outburst.

"The thing in a nutshell is," he whispered, "that there ain't no more sho profit in runnin' the blockade. I got my son, Renze, down at Wilmington, buyin' right on the spot, but competition is so durned bad on the auction prices there that I've even tried orderin' the whole lot of a runner. Trouble with that is you have to buy

the stuff 'n' pay the feller whether he gits through or not. I figured that runs me as high as havin' my boy buy at the public auctions at Wilmington."

"What has all this to do with me?" The actor sounded bored, but his eyes were sharp. "Don't you know I only run the underground from the United States?"

"I'm comin' to that," Duke snapped. "Course I'll have to keep buyin' bulk from the blockade 'cause that's the onliest way to git it, but what I want to know from you is: Can you git me through the underground 'nough small stuff, like quinine and chloroform, to make it worth my while?"

"With my stature it is possible for me to run through ten pounds of quinine, secreted in an inner jacket which I wear next to my person."

Milton Duke stiffened to keep from starting forward. He glanced down at the hand stroking his rough beard, to hide the gleam in his eyes.

"And how much would that be worth to you, Adair?"

"Three thousand dollars — Confederate."

This time Milton Duke did not control himself. He leaped forward. His voice grated out.

"You ain't on no stage now. Talk sense."

"You will sell it at twenty-five dollars an ounce, my good merchant, adding to your fortune a thousand dollars."

"What's a thousand dollars of shinplasters with gold at five to one?"

"Your net profit on my risking my neck."

Milton Duke swallowed. "I'll give you two."

"I will settle for twenty-five hundred, as doubtless you will manage to extract more than twenty-five dollars from your purchasers. Wait." He held up his hand as Duke started to speak. "You are not addressing a bargainer, but an artist. For the dross of barter I have little love. I desire only enough to procure my poor necessities. Twenty-five hundred will assure me of a profit which is the minimum necessary for my existence. You have my final word."

"Twenty-two hundred and fifty."

"Your words ring clear upon my ear, but for my heart they have no meaning."

Milton Duke studied the bold face, the eyes now reflective as the actor sniffed the brandy before downing the remnants of his third glass.

"I'll pay you that, Adair, if you'll promise heah 'n' now to git me some morphine and chloroform on other trips besides jest this one."

"That promise is gladly given—upon receipt of two thousand and five hundred dollars."

"In advance?" Duke scowled. "How do I know you'll come back?"

"You don't. Nor do I, my doubting Tomaso. That rests with God and the United States Army."

"I wisht you would n't talk so much about God. I mean, how do I know you'll come back if you *can*?"

"Shylock, you cease to amuse me!" The actor's raised voice thundered in the room and reëchoed through the wide halls. "Do you imagine that I'd deprive myself of the pleasures of this city for your God-damned shinplasters?"

"Sh-h." Duke glanced around nervously. "All right," he whispered, "I'll pay you in advance. But jest one thing. You said something about the United States Army. How do you git through?"

"By bringing them information from the South."

"A spy, huh?"

"An opprobrious name for one who conveys such innocuous bits of gossip as I."

"Then how do you git through our lines?"

"Your obtusity restores my good humor. I shall even indulge in more of your delightful hospitality—the brandy—while you fetch the money. . . . By bringing them information from the North."

Milton Duke stepped back. There was a constriction in his throat.

"Both sides ag'in the middle, huh?"

"Even as you." Adair smiled, bowed, and moved toward the decanter.

"But mine ain't so dangerous." Duke was thinking fast.

Adair paused and faced him, still smiling, but his voice was icy. "I would n't be so sure of that were I in your shoes. If one word were passed to some hard-fighting Reb who had seen a companion suffer for want of anæsthesia, I think your growing fortune might be enjoyed *only* by your progeny."

Milton Duke backed out of the door while Adair poured a drink.

"Remember that you are a Christian and in such times you must be careful of your associates, and read every day in the Testament your mother gave you. We all pray for you; for 'a speedy, just and honorable peace' and for your return. May God shield you, and freedom of our beloved country be your reward." — *From a letter found on the body of an unknown Virginia soldier*

The ladies in their furs, escorted by officers, looked very beautiful to Paul as he saw them talking on the columned portico of the Exchange Hotel. He paused by the stone slabs that winged the steps, and looked. What would it be like, to be going into the Exchange with such ladies? He had not imagined the lights and the voices and the laughter could be so lovely. Before the war he used to ask Brose how the city looked at night. Brose had always told him to wait until he could see for himself. Here it was, his first vision of his own city in evening gayety. It could not have been so wonderful before the war, for then there would have been no uniforms with gold braid on the sleeves. And then it would not have meant so much as now, coming from the trenches.

A carriage drew up and a frock-coated colonel stepped out and held his hand for a young lady. Her face was small and she was smiling and her soft lips drew back over little white teeth. A thin white scarf fluttered over her golden hair. Paul saw the red stripe of artillery on the collar and cuff of the colonel as he turned and looked at him. All at once Paul felt embarrassed. He backed into the shadow and shuffled down Franklin Street hill. That artillery officer might have been their own Colonel Cabell. Suddenly Paul knew the feeling of not belonging.

He glanced back up the street at the Richmond Varieties Theatre, with bright lights flaring on the poster. "Ballad and Burlesque, Sentiment and Farce, Dancing and Travesties." He did n't belong there, either. He moved on down the cold street with a sense of loneliness like none he had ever known, not even when he first left home with the Howitzers.

At the corner, where the red brick houses of Locust Alley sloped down toward Main Street, he stopped. Shaded lights reflected in the bare trees and the branches traced patterns against the night sky. Paul had to swallow hard to release the breath choking in his throat. He heard the thumping of his heart. In his overcoat pockets, his hands grew clammy. He stared at the white wooden columns of the narrow porches and the brass gleaming on the white doors. *Any house . . .* Brose had told him that, and Brose would know. He wished Brose was with him now. He shifted and dug his hands deeper into his frayed pockets. It was cold, standing here.

Out of the shadows on the other side of Franklin Street, a party of men swung toward him. One of them was muttering. Paul heard a curse. They moved into the street light. Two of Winder's guards held a filthy soldier between them. It was the soldier cursing. He had a spade beard, frayed at the edges and splaying out. One of his eyes was blackened. Paul started and his pulse raced. That soldier was Cassius Brown. He used to be in the battery next to Paul's and he had deserted. The guards saw Paul. They hesitated, alert and hostile.

He realized he must look suspicious, standing there in the shadows. He moved quickly down the street, pulling the cape of his overcoat around his neck.

"Skeeddaddle, soljuh!" That was Cass's voice. "If you don't want to land in Castle Thunder, git away from Winder's men!"

"Shut up," one of the men said.

Paul walked faster. They turned into Locust Alley and came down the street after him. The soldier was cursing and beginning to yell. Paul heard scuffling on the sidewalk.

"That's right, hit me, you dirty cowards! Ain't men enough to fit in the army. Stay heah in the city and pick on real soljuhs jest 'cause they're hongry and tryin' to git a little food."

"Yeh, tryin' to git it by beatin' a woman."

"I did n't aim to hurt her, I swear foh Gawd, I did n't. I was jest a little drunk, that's all. If you-all had ever been as cold and hongry as I have, instid of slinkin' heah like rats — *ow-w-w!*"

"Shut up or we'll give you worse. We're layin' for men like you."

"Yeh, go on and hit me, you dirty cowards. Go on! I can yell as loud as you can hit. *Ow-w-w!* Oh, goddam your lousy hides. *Ow! Ow! Ow!*"

A door opened and a stout woman in a silk dress looked out. Paul walked into the light.

"What's that?" she said. Her voice was soft and a little scared.

"A couple of Winder's men taking a soldier to Castle Thunder."

She glanced down the street. Then she looked at Paul and smiled. Her teeth shone.

"You better come in before they get you," she said softly.

The blood burned his cheeks. He tried to think of an excuse.

"Come on, soldier, don't be afraid. You're safe in here."

He could think of nothing to say. He swallowed again. Cass was quiet now. They were dragging him. Paul moved through the open iron gate and hurried up the steps. The lights were bright on a red carpet through the open door and white panels

glowed. The woman retreated before him into the doorway. She looked at him with a wise smile and he felt very young.

"Why, you're just a baby," she said. "Did you get your back pay, baby?"

"Yes'm," he gulped. "Three months."

She closed the door, forcing him in. "You come right on in here. I've got the sweetest little thing for you. You'll be crazy about her."

"Yes'm." Paul followed down the warm hall, feeling the money in his pocket. He had given his mother fifteen dollars — enough for a load of coal — and he had only three five-dollar bills left of his thirty-three dollars. It was brand-new money — the first complete issue, the paymaster had said — and the five-dollar bills with the Richmond Capitol engraved on them had looked like riches. Now he was afraid it would n't be a drop in the bucket in a house like this.

She stood aside and he moved into a brightly lighted room with red wallpaper and white paneling. Ottomans were placed around sofas. An oil painting hung over the white mantel. A fire was blazing.

"You wait here, baby," the woman smiled. She had some gold teeth in the back and they gleamed. "And take off that heavy coat. You're at home now." She hurried out.

Paul felt uneasy in all this richness. A lot of people must still have money, he thought. Then the door opened and a young girl stood there. She had soft red hair, brushed back from her forehead, and green eyes looked gravely at him. Her mouth was small and it turned up a little as she moved into the room.

"Are n't you going to stay awhile?" She spoke in a low voice without much life.

Paul nodded. He unbuttoned the patched overcoat and was ashamed of its ragged edges as she watched him. She stepped forward and took it and laid it across a chair. She motioned him to a sofa and her green eyes watched him curiously. As he sat down he wished he knew what to say.

"You're in the artillery, I see." She sat beside him.

He smiled then. "The Richmond Howitzers, up at Fredericksburg."

"It must be awful cold this winter, in those huts."

"It's a terrible winter—but our huts are n't so bad." He looked straight ahead at the red wallpaper. It had pretty designs. "We cut pine logs into lengths and lay one atop the other, and it's sort of secure. We put oak shingles on the roof and chunk the cracks with daubs of red clay and water. It's not so bad."

He pictured the square, bare room with the bunks along the walls and his friends singing in the evening as they darned their clothes and worked at haversacks and bread trays and pipes, and he almost wished he was there now.

"But do you have a *fire* there?"

"We have a fire. We have a nail keg on the roof for a chimney."

She laughed and he looked at her then. Her skin was so soft and her small mouth so moist that he had to turn away. Now surely he should say something.

"You've never been down to the city before?" she asked.

He felt his face burning and shook his head.

"It must be nice to sleep in a bed again," she said, very low.

"It sure is, after that straw we sleep on—and clean clothes, you don't know how wonderful that is. I think the smell of clean underwear is the sweetest thing on earth."

"I hear a lot of you men have n't got enough clothes."

"That's right. Those that don't get any from home are barefooted and bareheaded. But they're all real cheerful. We visit and sing and make jokes at the amachoo barbers, and then when we get a food box from home we have a fine time. You see, usually we don't have anything but salt meat and hardtack."

He looked at her again. Her green eyes were fixed steadily on him as though they wanted something from him. He wet his lips and shifted nervously on the seat. She shifted, too, like a cat, and moved nearer him. The silk dress slipped down on her shoulder. The flesh was soft and glowing, and there was nothing under the

dress. His breath choked him. Now he knew he should say something.

"There're lots of sweet things here, soldier — beds and ladies' underwear and good food and some nice wine that came through the blockade. Maybe you'd like some wine, soldier."

Paul nodded vigorously, almost gagging with the breath caught in his throat. The girl got up slowly, brushing against him. Her perfume made his nostrils quiver. She smiled down at him without opening her lips. Her green eyes scared him.

"You take off your jacket, soldier," she whispered. "I'll be back with the wine."

He stared at her as she backed to the door with her strange smile. When the door closed he jumped up. He let out his constricted breath. He looked around the room, although he didn't know what he was looking for. From a distant room he heard voices singing a waltz. He should be enjoying this, like those people. Here was the real night world of the city, just as he had dreamed it a thousand times. Here he was in the most wonderful place he had ever seen, and that girl was as pretty as a picture. The singing grew louder — lusty, drunken voices. It called up the camp again and he wished he was there with his friends on a night when letters and boxes had come from home.

The drunken voices soared in a deepening bellow and the words floated to him. He grew very still as he listened: —

"Just before the battle, Mother,
I am thinking most of you,
While upon the field we're watching,
With the enemy in view.
Comrades brave are round me lying,
Filled with thoughts of home and God,
For well they know that on the morrow
Some will sleep beneath the sod.

"Farewell, Mother, you may never,
Press me to your heart again;
But, oh, you'll not forget me, Mother,
If I'm numbered with the slain. . . ."

The tears burned in his eyes and he was all stopped up inside. All he wanted was to get out. He groped for his overcoat and flung on his flap-brimmed slouch hat. He pulled open the door and walked down the hall with his head bent. A woman's voice screamed. The singing broke off. Doors flung open. A heavy man, yelling at him, came plunging down the stairs. Paul hurried. The hall filled with angry voices. He reached the foot of the stairs at the same time as the heavy man. The man's shoulders were very broad and he hunched them forward in front of Paul, like a barrier.

"Where the hell you think you're going?"

Paul's body grew rigid, as though he would never be able to move, and his tongue was frozen in his mouth. He stared at the heavy man. The thick jaw was blue-colored with a beard line and his eyes were small, like a pig's.

"Let him have it, Mikel!"

Paul glanced down the hall. The red-haired girl stood there holding a tray with a bottle and glasses on it. The older woman who had let him in stood beside her. Behind them were other women, all painted and all pretty. But now they looked as if they hated him. Men crowded on the stairs, half dressed and fully dressed, most of them soldiers. But they were against him, too.

"Well," the heavy man snarled, "are you coming back in—or do I drag you back in?"

Paul's eyes darted back. The man swayed toward him, one crooked arm swinging up. All at once the tension holding his body broke. He felt flushed and trembling. He stepped back and fumbled in the overcoat over his arm.

"No, you don't, damn you." The man yelled and jumped.

The big revolver jerked free of the pocket and the barrel hit the man's stomach just as his hand grabbed Paul's shoulder.

"Take your hand off me," Paul screamed, "or I'll blast your guts out!"

The hand dropped. The man crouched lower, swaying, eyes measuring. In the hall there was a sudden silence.

"What do you think you're going to do with that?" the man said.

"You'll find out if you try to stop me, you God-damned conscript evader, you whorehouse pimp. Come on, why don't you, drag me back!"

The big man had never heard of Brose Kirby, but he was looking at his brother. And Paul knew, in that moment, he was not Brose's brother for nothing.

"That's all right, soldier," the bouncer said. "Just — go."

Paul backed out into the cool, clean night. He was shaking so he could hardly get his overcoat on. He walked fast down the row of red brick houses toward Main Street and he was crying as though his heart would break.

"The recently published correspondence between the Cabinets of France, Great Britain, and Russia indicates that the period is fast approaching when the dictates of reason, justice, and humanity will be respected, and our undoubted right to recognition as an independent nation will be acknowledged. This recognition must, in the nature of things, be followed by a speedy peace. . . ." — *Secretary of State Benjamin to James M. Mason, Confederate Ambassador to Great Britain*

St. George Paxton was standing at his desk, with his greatcoat on, checking over a newly arrived office invoice when Virginius Kirby came slowly and quietly through the door. The gray cape of Virginius' overcoat was drawn tightly about his throat like an old woman's shawl and his flabby cheeks were gray-white. His hair, almost white, ruffled in ragged edges over his red ears and needed badly the attentions of a professional barber.

"It's bitter cold outside." He walked to the small grate where a few pieces of slag sputtered and worked off a pair of cracked, thin

kid gloves of streaked gray. "I dyed my old evening gloves, but they scarcely suffice for such weather. My hands ache, just from walking here from my brother's."

"Is n't your brother selling candles that he makes at home?"

"His daughter, Elizabeth, makes them."

"I wonder if he could n't try his hand at some pencils. We gave up ink, except for important signatures, and this latest arrival of pencils is four dollars a dozen and very inferior."

Virginius shook his head gloomily. "He 'll have to try something. He wanted to see me about selling his store. It's failing. But he could get absolutely nothing for it now. Everyone is speculating, and they don't want stores except for auctioneering. I swear Main Street looks like the Fair, with all those red flags out."

St. George tossed down the invoice. "We'll have to put red flags on the government if we don't get better prices—especially on drugs. I'm beginning to suspect that some of those purveyors are buying from the highest bidder in order to have their own palms greased. By the way, what do you know of this Philip Parramore whom you recommended?"

"Nothing, except that he was my brother's clerk."

"Well, he is living very high for a lieutenant, and he's been seen with this profiteer, Milton Duke." St. George saw that the war clerk was uninterested. "In any event, I'm on my way now to the Richmond Quartermaster Department to make a check. Will you join me?"

"I might as well." Virginius rubbed his hands together over the smoke, then blew on them. "I've thawed out a little."

St. George wrapped his scarf around his neck and drew on his woollen mittens. "You ought to have your wife knit you gloves, like mine."

"My wife spends all her time on the boarders."

"Virginius, do you mind if I inquire what you ask for board? Mrs. Paxton and I are considering renting our house and boarding."

"From some we get sixty dollars a month."

"Sixty dollars! And you dye gloves? You should be as rich as a speculator."

Virginius shook his head. "Sixty only from some. The others we support—refugees—so their sons can stay in the army." He smiled then, unexpectedly, and a sad sweetness touched his face. "You see, I lack your philosophic detachment, Saint. I'm just a blind believer."

St. George was stirred faintly with annoyance. "I am not so detached as people seem to believe. I think it understandable that one of my years should be beyond passionate emotion for anything. But I've devoted the best of my talents and my energies—more than I ever did to my banking—to this government, such as it is."

"I was not implying a criticism of your patriotism."

There was a quiet dignity in his manner, and St. George was reminded of the man he had first met. Since then, Virginius had become so completely identified with the Confederacy that St. George frequently forgot he had not always been an impoverished war clerk. He had known other lives too, which had not died within him, and they were suggested now in his almost pathetic dignity. But St. George wanted none of his friend's mysteries now. He jammed on his lustreless beaver and muttered, "Are you ready?"

Virginius turned from him and crossed the room. He held open the door. They passed into the chill of the long hall. A thin man walked stiffly toward them. His mouth was drawn in a line that deepened the hollows in his pallid face. His eyes burned feverishly. St. George and Virginius touched their hats.

"Good morning, Mr. President."

"Good morning, gentlemen." His voice sounded tired and he drew a long breath before opening the door of the Treasury Secretary's office.

"There's your government," St. George said bitterly. "Going to see his toady now to concoct some fine scheme for enriching the country with pretty new bills, while cotton rots in the gins. Davis

does n't care a straw about the condition of the people as long as his theories sound logical."

"Is it too late for cotton now?" Virginius asked dully.

"It would n't be, of course, if we had European recognition. But England has taken a strong position and won't retract, and France follows England like a dog's shadow."

"They 'd retract if we invaded successfully!"

"Yes, Virginius, you're at last right about your obsession of invasion. With the failure of diplomacy and finance, Lee's army is our only hope. But you know well that the President's bureaucracy extends even to the army."

"God knows I do." They came out of the Bank Street entrance into the biting wind that whipped down over the hills of Capitol Square, and walked toward Twelfth. Virginius went on bitterly, "Seddon is just like all the other secretaries. We spend all our time in the War Department transferring troops from point to point of the map, as though Davis were trying to see if he could n't have one soldier on every foot of Confederate soil. If we would give Lee enough men to gather the fruits of his victories, we'd have won our independence by now. Lee is aging under all this. He was in the office yesterday, and his beard is almost white."

"It's the same in all departments except the Ordnance. That Northrop runs his Commissary Department to please Davis, not to feed the soldiers. It's this book balancing of theirs! They balance everything except the army's diet. He lets them starve while he develops his wonderful systems, and sends them letters explaining what they should have to eat instead of sending them food. If it were n't for private contributions, the army would have deserted long since out of hunger."

"To tell the truth," Virginius said mournfully, "if the government does n't change its tactics, I fear for us."

"I've been fearing ever since we began, when they refused to use their cotton for European gold. Now, while the blockade is strangling us, Congress debates on theories."

"And they debate while Lee floods our office with pleas for men!

But Davis prefers the way his pet, Bragg, fights out in Tennessee. He fights Rosecrans to a standstill and then withdraws and waits. Davis of course says he holds the way to Chattanooga. God, if we'd only stop holding places all over the country and invade! It still would n't be too late for recognition."

They reached the Belvius Building and Virginius paused.

"I reckon I won't go in with you after all, Saint. I think I'll go into the St. James here and have a toddy. I'm frozen."

St. George turned and saw the pain in his friend's eyes. The new pouches under them were dark, as though he might be ill. The old beau realized, with a guilty start, that Virginius had been unusually gloomy since he came into his office. He had probably come for some word of cheer and St. George had been absorbed in his own bad humor. He put his mittened hand on the worn sleeve of the former attorney.

"Virginius, I'm sorry I did n't notice before that you seem troubled. I'm a very old man, you know, and these duties are wearing, especially the stupidities that constantly offend my whole being."

"Don't mention it, Saint." Virginius waved his hand in its split evening glove. "I should n't inflict my worries on you. I'm not so young myself any more and these privations of my family sometimes sap my spirit. And certain things have been brought to my attention lately — of an upsetting nature."

St. George looked into those tired eyes and remembered the evening last winter in the library on Clay Street when he had seen the likeness of Virginius' first wife.

"Virginius, a year ago you divided with me your last choice wine — Marquis de Pombal. I have seventy-five dollars to-day. I sold my silver-lever watch. I must buy a pair of shoes for my wife and for myself, but I'm sure there will be enough left for a brandy." He glanced up at the long, three-storied St. James reaching back along Twelfth Street. It looked uninviting. "I would take it as an honor if you'll go with me to the new American and have — maybe two brandies."

The war clerk's eyes moistened.

"Saint, I'll accept with pleasure and gratitude. And—and let me say that I might've seemed unmindful at times of your kindnesses to me and your proffered friendship, but I appreciate —"

"I'll let you say nothing of the sort."

For a moment, forgetful of mittens and threadbare greatcoat, St. George was the ancient dandy again. He saw a glow of pleased respect in the eyes of his new friend. Suddenly he realized that the war had changed him as it had all others. He, with the other people of Richmond, had been reduced to the basic elements in his nature. Now, he and Virginus Kirby lived by the same makeshifts and same standards, suffered the same fears and hopes. In the Confederacy they had become alike. He smiled with some of his old detachment, for all that he had lost and for all he had become. With a vestige of irony he said in a gentle voice:—

"I, too, am appreciative of your friendship, Virginus."

They shook hands.

"You will," Virginus said, "at least permit me to drink a toast to your pet hope—European recognition."

"More than that. We'll drink to a wiser government. No bureaucracy —"

". . . But aggression . . ."

". . . Supplies on the field and not on paper . . ."

". . . All exemptions in uniform, and invasion . . ."

"Damnation! With us, Virginus, we'll win in spite of the government."

"With us, St. George, we'll win in spite of hell."

Their hands parted, and the two old men turned down Twelfth Street. The wind, fluttering the Confederate flag on the Capitol, whipped at their stooped backs.

CHAPTER XVII

"The enemy will make every effort to crush us between now and June. . . . In view of the vast increase of the forces . . . of the savage and brutal policy he has proclaimed . . . let every effort be made . . . to fill and maintain the ranks of our army, until God, in His mercy, shall bless us with the establishment of our independence." — *General Lee to Secretary of War Seddon*

Lying on the couch in Mildred's room, a gray shawl tight about her shoulders, Mrs. Wade droned in mournful monotony. "What is coming of the family I don't know. If they can stay with Constance's family in North Carolina no longer, and they certainly can't return to Kensington, I reckon they'll have to come here. It's the least we can do, and in these times all any of us have left is our cause. . . ." Her voice wavered off. After a pause it came striking out, high-pitched and strained. "I don't wonder you have no interest in discussing your family, Mildred! I reckon you're ashamed to think of them when you go about with this Sergeant Kirby."

Mildred turned from the mirror and looked at the tight mask that distorted her mother's face. She tried to be calm before the spite that had nagged and lashed at her for two months.

"Mother, I've stood as much as I can about the family and how I should feel toward them. I'm not ashamed to think of them, but I am sick of talking of them, constantly, as though there was nothing else in life —"

"I talk of them to keep my mind off what you're doing, if you want to know. I thank the Lord I have them to think of, else

I don't know how I could have kept my mind off how you betrayed your father."

"I kept my promise," she said coldly.

"Yes, that's the way you save your conscience, I know —"

"I don't need to save my conscience."

"Oh, if only your uncles or somebody could be here. I don't know what to do with you. You were never like anybody else. Your father alone understood you. He tried to protect you. He —"

"He tried to protect me in his way. But his way is gone. He does n't understand what's happening now. This is different from what he knew."

"Men and women don't change. You're not any different. You're just headstrong and you're betraying your father, that's what you're doing."

"Maybe I'm not different, but my life is. Brose Kirby is the one thing in the world that means something to me now. I don't believe Father would want me to deny myself that."

Her mother moved into a sitting position with slow rigidity. Unnoticed, the shawl fell from her shoulders. "You mean to tell me that this man, your father's shipping clerk, means more to you than anything else?"

"Yes. Yes! I've told you a hundred times I love him. Can't you understand love? Do you think Father wanted to protect me from love?"

Her mother rose to her feet with the same rigid slowness. "I think your father would rather have given up the fight for his country's freedom than for you to have this kind of love. What do you think can ever come of it? It's not love. It's sinful."

She felt the fury harden within her. "Mother, I tell you, if you don't stop you'll make me say something I'm sorry for."

"If you're not sorry for what you've done to me already, nothing you ever say will make you sorry. You're past being sorry for anybody, you're past everything but your own selfish gratifications. You think I'm a poor innocent, don't you?" Slowly, rigidly, her pale eyes staring, she advanced. "Well, I know that your love, as

you call it, is nothing but gratification. You could n't marry him. Even you would n't do that."

"I'd marry him to-morrow if he'd ask me."

"And do you think he ever would?"

"I don't care."

"Of course you don't care." She was so close that Mildred could see the new tiny lines that drew her mouth into its grimace. She raised her finger in Mildred's face. "You don't care for anything but this war. You think you can do anything you want because of the war. Let me tell you something, young lady —"

Mildred knocked her mother's hand away from her face. "I'm going to tell you something."

"I don't want to hear anything you've got to say," Mrs. Wade cut her off.

"You're going to hear."

"I won't listen to you when you get like this." She turned away.

Mildred grabbed her shoulders and held her there. "You're to listen for once. You say I don't care about anything but this war. What else is there? I never had a life before as you did. My life began in the war. That's all I know, all I've ever known, maybe all I ever will know. When you were my age did you wear a calico dress like this, with gourd seeds for buttons? Did you go to a party where everyone will wear calico, because that is only two dollars a yard!" Her mother jerked free and fell back from her. Mildred followed her. "You don't like to hear that, do you? You don't like to think of that bonnet I'm wearing. Do you remember when it was bought for me in Washington — a pearl-gray silk with lilies of the valley trimming the inside? Look at it now! Look at this mosquito netting over my cambric —" she jerked open the bosom of her postilion blouse — "does that look like anything but war?"

Her mother had retreated to the sofa. It touched against her legs and she dropped, limply. The mask broke on her face. She stared up in childlike helplessness. "But we're all wearing

makeshifts, Mildred. You must n't take it personally. We have to accept these things and go on."

"Do you think you've accepted them and gone on? You've been like a madwoman." Her mother recoiled, hurt and frightened. Mildred checked the unleashed fury. It fought inside her for further release.

"I—I'm sorry, Mildred. I did n't know how I'd been until I saw the look on your face." Her head dropped forward. "Oh, dear, I wish I was the one who had died. You're all I have left and you turn on me like that. I—I wish I did know how to deal with you."

"You don't have to deal with me at all, Mother. You've said you never understood me. I reckon I don't understand you either. But you've got to see my life can never be as yours was. The war is my life."

"Yes, yes." She fumbled for her shawl and glanced at the two little fingers of flame in the low fire. She shook her head. "The war is our life now, but it will end."

"We might, too. You won't see that Brose Kirby is as important to me as Father was to you, and he might end before we've ever had any life. Even Richmond might end if the Yankees get here."

"Oh, no, I can't see that this man is that important to you. I won't see it."

"Yes, Mother, that's the truth. You won't see it. You've hidden from it, just as you hid from the war itself at first."

Her mother raised her head slowly, her eyes wide with wonderment.

"Do I hide from things?"

Looking at the fragile, bewildered woman, whom even war and death could not mature, Mildred's hard core of resentment at last broke. But no warmth came. The hurt had been too deep. She studied her mother with a sympathy that was detached and wary.

A knock sounded softly in the silence. "Mr. Kirby is downstairs, Miss Mildred."

"I'll be right down, John." She turned back to the oval mirror and fitted on her made-over bonnet. The dark blue it had been dyed looked well enough, but the bluebells decorating the crown would never look like anything but the lilies of the valley that had lined the brim when the bonnet was new. As she threw on her cloak, she faced her mother, hoping at least for a good-night that would be warm.

Her mother's gaze was fixed on her pleadingly. "Maybe I have hidden from this, Mildred. Maybe it seemed too much for me with — with your father's death and everything. But I can't believe that you could go through marriage with this man. This war will end and he would n't fit in with your friends. If you would just think of what kind of life you'd have with him in Richmond when everything was natural again."

It was no use. She made her voice friendly. "All right, Mother."

"Will you promise me that you'll think of that when you're with him to-night, among your own kind of friends?"

"Yes, Mother. Good night." She hurried from the room. She paused in the cool hallway. She wanted to think only of him when she saw him.

She moved slowly down the stairs, filling her mind with his image. As the staircase curved, she saw him, standing in the hall, just as he had been in her imagination, just as she had come to know him. Dark and rugged in his faded, patched overcoat, the dim light of the chandelier glowing on his loose brown hair, he did lack something indefinable, intangible, which her friends possessed. But he had something which they lacked, some imponderable force unlike all the men she had ever known. It was that memory which had harried her during all those months when she tried to forget him.

He glanced up. There was none of the quick attention, the stiffening into a gallant pose to which she was accustomed. He moved with lazy assurance toward the foot of the stairs, like a big cat. That assurance was of her. Feeling it possess her, Mildred suffered the quickening and the weakening that had become so

familiar. He reached the stairs as she touched the floor. He held out no hand. He gave a slow grin. His black eyes moved over her, touched and found her good.

"Your butler has a funny smell," he said.

She laughed shakily. "He's been scraping smokehouses for salt. You would n't know about such things, but, since we lost the salt mines, it's gone to a dollar a pound. If John gets enough, we might turn speculators."

"Buy some more envelopes if you do. I've used up all you gave me."

"You'll have to do as I do. Re-use those sent to you. I'll write you on those you send me and then you send them back again."

"I never expected to be such a faithful correspondent."

"I told you you'd do many things you never had before, and you are."

"Like what?"

"Well, taking me this evening to my friends' house, those you call snobs."

"No, fops are your friends. Snobs are fops who're not your friends."

She smiled up at him and took his arm. "Let's go and see the fops."

As her lawn fell behind and they walked under the bared trees, a chill touched her. She huddled down in her cloak collar against the February wind. The chill was on her nerves. Her mother's words returned. For the first time he was to enter her world, she was to share him with her friends. She cared not a fig for their reactions to him. Her apprehension, she realized, was for Brose. Suppose he lost something of himself, the strange dark hardness that drew and held her?

Down Franklin Street the wind soughed through the ivy vines on the red brick house where General Lee's son Custis had his mess with other staff officers. She remembered as a child being taken to visit the Lee kinsmen at Shirley, near Kensington on the river. At Sixth Street the high brick wall shadowed the winter

garden of the Archer house, and she remembered peeking into it when spring bloomed and she was on her way to the Pegrams'. She passed Mrs. Stanard's square brick house, with its semi-circular stone steps, where as a little girl she had been introduced to William Makepeace Thackeray and where later she had met so many young dandies who now were important men in the new country. To the dark soldier beside her these Franklin Street homes, which held for her memories of another life, were only house fronts. And to her his world was only a remembered glimpse of a narrow, sinister street of locust trees and secret and silent houses. Here their two worlds met, on the cold, shadowed street, to the roll of a distant drum marching a night funeral.

At Linden Row her nerves tightened and she wanted to slow her steps. It was the same feeling as when she used to meet him, and at the last moment her courage faltered. The narrow, white-columned porches against the red brick fronts evoked all the order and custom of her world. Brose, holding open the iron gate to the Chiltons', suggested in every movement that reckless abandon of his. In the dimly reflected light from the hall, she glanced at him. Shaded by the wide, curling brim of his black hat, his face showed not the least change of mood. He did not show even interest. The bleak wind chilled her through as he banged the brass knocker.

Mrs. Chilton opened the door to warmth and a soft glow on white panels and gentle voices laughing. Her recently grayed hair gave her face a touch of austerity. For the first time Mildred was aware of her analytical gaze. It flickered to Brose, steadied, shrewd, intent, appraising. Her breath coming quick, Mildred said:—

"Mrs. Chilton, I want to present Sergeant Kirby, of the First Virginia. He's recuperating from a wound . . . at Fredericksburg."

The older woman smiled slowly and her face, forming a welter of slim wrinkles, grew very bright. "Sergeant Kirby, I am delighted to receive one of the *men* of the Bloody First. Please come in."

Brose gave a short bow and waited for Mildred to pass through the doorway. Behind her came his most casual drawl.

"Mrs. Chilton, I am delighted to be here."

Mrs. Chilton's smile broadened. There was no suggestion of hauteur. She bobbed her head slightly as she looked him over. He stood straight under the light of the lamp which glowed on his long hair and dark face.

"Take off that heavy coat, my boy," Mrs. Chilton said. "You'll see a pile of equally tattered ones back in the hall. We have no butler any more, at least for the door. He doubles in harness and triples in cookery and I would n't trust him out of my sight. Mildred, come with me."

She left him standing there, glancing around in faint curiosity, and Mrs. Chilton was saying: "Wherever did you find him, my girl? I did n't know you had the sense—in all conscience, I did n't. He's a man, take my word for it, and I've seen a lot of creatures in trousers. And I know a thing or two about first sergeants. Randolph had his troubles with them when he was a captain. . . . He has the blackest eyes I ever saw. Where have you been hiding him?"

"Mother does n't like him." While she removed her cloak, she tried to read Mrs. Chilton. She was a shrewd woman, and a shrewder hostess.

"Oh, poor Isobel, of course she would n't. He'd terrify her. But I should n't talk about her after all she's been through. How is she?"

"Not too well, Mrs. Chilton." She fluffed her hair before the mirror.

"Of course not, the poor thing always was a child. And so pretty. It must be a strain on you, honey. It's a pity she could n't see how much better off you'll be with a man like this to handle you than one of those young dandies who are pretty by profession."

Mildred turned from the mirror. "But, Mrs. Chilton," she started to protest.

"Now, now, my child, I've been old much longer than you realize

and I've spent years watching you young things come out. And I watched you particularly, Mildred, because Randolph used to dance with you so much. When my husband liked to dance with a young girl, she was dangerous."

Mildred smiled in spite of her restraint.

"You may laugh, honey, but I *know* what you do to men, and I don't think for a minute that I'd believe a man like that black-eyed devil downstairs would n't be mad about you. But, don't worry, you won't breathe it. Oh, Lord, how I envy you! There was no war when I was young."

Mildred laughed. "We'd better go down and look after him."

"Honey, I can assure you that is one young man who does n't need anyone to look after him—anywhere!" The last came with emphasis, and Mildred met squarely the wisdom in the older woman's eyes.

"Thank you." She knew then that Mrs. Chilton was not being merely a hostess.

Brose waited at the stairs, but no tension held her now. She watched Mrs. Chilton beam on him. "You're just in time for charades, Sergeant Kirby. I hope you enjoy them."

"I'd enjoy anything here, Mrs. Chilton." He grinned.

In the crowded parlor heads turned and Mildred wanted to be looking at him, to touch him, to hold him close. *That young man doesn't need anyone to look after him—anywhere. . . .* The gentlemen in the room, nodding and bowing, could not have that said of them. Most were men of courage too, many were fierce fighters. Some were reckless in their way and some had their color and abandon. Not one had a single tone like Brose's reckless sureness. That was the force she had missed in all the dandies during that succession of unfinished episodes. That was the force by which Brose possessed her.

Captain Cecil Cheswick, the young Englishman on Longstreet's staff, vacated an ottoman near the front windows and smiled with big white teeth. Holding up a finger for silence, he tiptoed to a sofa where Sally Pinckney and Quartermaster Colonel Lancaster made

room. Mildred felt the stares of everybody as she and Brose sat on the heavy cushion. She looked beyond them to the back room where two bedspreads, dyed Confederate gray, were being drawn jerkily apart over a clothesline, exposing a stage.

On a canvas backdrop a rough frame building was sketched, with a sign bearing the words ACCOMMODATIONS FOR MAN AND — and there was a rude drawing of General Butler, the United States commandant of New Orleans. The guests turned to face the charade, when a lady and gentlemen in traveling clothes halted in front of the painted building and dropped handbags on the floor. Now she could look at Brose. She felt that her love lay naked in her face and she had to say something.

"That backdrop is painted by Vizitelly, the famous artist." She heard her own words, like a caress.

Brose stared at it. "What's it supposed to be?"

"You're to guess." She studied the outlines of his thin face.

The room rocked with laughter. "Butler is for beast! Ho-ho . . . 'Beast' Butler. . . . That's rich. . . . Accommodations for man and *beast*. . . . The word is 'inn'!"

The curtains were drawn. She smiled at the puzzlement on him. Then he nodded his head toward a quiet, simply dressed officer leaning in the recess of the mantel. "Is n't that General A. P. Hill?"

She glanced at the full-bearded man with a large nose jutting over full but tight lips and deep-set eyes of intense seriousness.

"Yes," she whispered. "I reckon men think him handsome."

"Don't you?"

"He's so quiet and shy. I never understood how he could be such a hard fighter."

"He's the fiercest division commander in the army."

"I thought that your Pickett was, Brose. Don't spoil my pride in your Virginia division."

"Ours is a good fighting division, I reckon as good as General Hill's. But he's such a tiger when he's right."

She smiled in tenderness at the affinity. The curtains were drawn again, but Brose was looking at the guests. The wall of a room

was painted on canvas and several pieces of furniture were in front of it. Three girls with cloths on their heads busily swept and dusted. Brose touched her and nodded again.

"Who's that puny-looking little fellow?"

She saw the small, pale man with his wide eyes. "Why, Brose, that's Mr. Stephens. Don't you recognize our Vice-President?"

"I thought that's who he was. No wonder we have such a peace policy with a poor, sick-looking fellow like him."

"He's a brilliant man."

His brows lowered a little. "He talks too much."

"I've got it!" A voice yelled. "Egad, the word is *dust*. Dust!"

The bedspread curtains were drawn again together.

"Now watch this one, Brose, and try to guess it."

"I don't see any sense in this game. I'd rather look at the people. You surely see famous ones. That's the first time I got a good look at General Hill."

"Will you take back what you said about the fops?"

"That fellow over there is a fop."

She saw the lean, sprawled figure of Bradfute Peyton, his sardonic face archly creased as he whispered to Lizzie Branch.

"He's a newspaper writer and a famous wit."

"Fop."

The curtains dragged back and revealed a courtroom scene.

"Trial!" Someone called almost at once. Voices started up.

"Inn . . . dust . . . trial. That's the word, *industrial*."

Brose turned to her, his black brows drawn lower. "What is this game?"

"You watch, and you'll see."

"How long does it go on?"

"Not much longer." She smiled and unconsciously moved closer until the feel of his body was against her. His eyes swiftly lit and he seemed to bear down on her. She grew still inside, his desire possessing her.

"Darling," she whispered.

"I wish we were out of this place."

"We will be soon. Watch this one. There go the curtains."

She herself could not watch. His mood was in her now and she was aware of her difference from all these girls in their calico dresses. She had played and gone to school with them, then to little girls' parties, later to dinners and dances, and finally to war parties, tacky parties, sewing and cooking parties, and the Cary girls' "Starvation Club" parties. Remembering their shared secrets and confidences, she saw unfold the pattern of their lives, and she knew that no longer was she a part of that pattern and no more would she share their lives.

It was not that Brose did not belong to this world or that their love had been lived differently from the loves of her friends. It was the color of her love, its fury and violence, that had no place in this ordered life. She pictured the lives of her friends during the past two months, of what they had been formed. She compared them with what had formed hers during those winter afternoons when she had walked the old streets of the besieged city with the man who had awakened her desire.

In those afternoons she and Brose had lived in a secret world of their own: of gray uniforms, wounded soldiers and paroled, furloughed soldiers and raw recruits; of lean troops in ragged gray and homespun butternut, muffled and hairy; with their muskets shining bright, shuffling in broken shoes and burlap through the snow; of drums that rolled the whole day long for death marches to Hollywood, their country's Valhalla; of heavy guns rumbling over cobblestones, the shiny bronzed Napoleons leaving the Tredegar Iron Works on their way to Lee, the muddy, scarred Parrott field pieces, with "U S" on the caisson boxes, on their way to the arsenal for re-fitting and relettering; of bugles that blared and bells that tolled in the Virginia Central Depot for arriving and departing soldiers; of silent blue men marching in file to Libby Prison, and sullen gray deserters to Castle Thunder; of the clatter of cavalry rushing through the city; of young girls in old bonnets and homemade dresses of ancient goods; of old women in rags that could not be remade; of young boys drilling under a one-armed man, of old men drilling

under a one-legged youth — of all those colors their love had been composed, and all those moods had relived and re-formed in them, transmuted into the one passionate tone of their desire. . . .

The last charade ended. The guests stirring and beginning to talk broke into her mood. She wanted to withdraw from the conversation that widened and spread toward them. She wanted to hold her proud consciousness of difference. She wanted no intrusion on the strange secret beauty of her love. She thought of the kisses of her friends, in rooms like this, and she thought of her own in the shadows of garden walls, in the bare woods along the Canal tow-path while the voices of the muleteers sang across the water, on a high hill in Hollywood near the old dueling ground with the city spread out before them, and the last at dusk behind the bell tower in Capitol Square. But the talk had drawn them in and the mood was lost.

Bradfute Peyton's elegant drawl was rising through laughter and Brose said, "There's that comic again."

"Wit, darling," she whispered. "He's supposed to be funny."

"Yes, messieurs and mesdames, it was actually champagne they served," Bradfute was saying, "at three hundred dollars. I shall become famous as the man who drank champagne in the winter of '63."

"In the army," Brose said, not too low, "they'd say that such a perty rooster as him should get down and scratch."

"Brose!"

Captain Cheswick, the English youngster, whirled around and flashed his big teeth. "In the army you'd be right, old fellow. You just back?"

"No, captain, I have n't been with the army since Fredericksburg. I'm leaving day after to-morrow."

"Wounded, eh? Too bad you're going back to Fredericksburg. It's fearfully cold there."

"I'm going to Suffolk. I'm in Longstreet's corp."

"The deuce you say. So am I. What outfit?"

"First Virginia, Kemper's brigade, Pickett's division."

"The Bloody First, what?" He laughed shortly. "Rugged lads. You're in a good division. The General is very fond of Pickett, you know." The untrusted negro butler stood before him, offering hot chocolate in hand-painted cups. "Oh . . . thank you." He took a large piece of chocolate cake. "Won't see this in camp, sergeant. Did you hear of Burnside's mud march?"

"No. I heard that he'd been removed and Hooker put in his place."

"Right you are, but I imagine the mud march had a good deal to do with his removal. He decided the time was ripe to wipe the Rebels off the face of the earth and he took his 'greatest army in the universe' out of their snug winter huts for an 'On to Richmond,' you know. Well, the heavens simply opened on the poor Yanks and the 'greatest army in the universe' was mired in mud. They trekked back to their camp, cursing the imbecile, and shortly after he was removed. I'm sorry he's gone. He was more amusing than Pope. However, I daresay this Hooker won't give us any trouble. Though, do you know, they've been reënforced again since we slaughtered them at Fredericksburg and still have their hundred and fifty thousand. I've never seen anything like it. They spring up like genii. Kill one and two come back . . . What?" He held his ear toward Sally Pinckney, and nodded. "You're right about the rooster. Hah!" He smiled at Mildred and returned to Sally.

"Fellow'd talk your head off," Brose whispered.

Mildred was balancing her cup of chocolate on her knee. "Have some chocolate, darling, and you take a good piece of cake, too. I happen to know it costs fifteen dollars, so enjoy yourself."

He fished for the largest piece on the plate, stared down the butler, and juggled his chocolate. A reedy officer in trim cavalry uniform stroked a long moustache which draped around his mouth and recounted the details of the President's reception.

". . . I know they were damask curtains in her train because I've often seen them at her library window. Oh, by the way, speaking of libraries, have you heard the soldier's name for Hugo's

new serial, *Les Misérables*? They called it 'Lee's Miserables'!"

Brose scowled at the laughter. "Another fop."

"He's one of the President's aides."

"Good he is. His life would be miserable all right in the army."

Warm with a deep glow for him, she reached to take his hand. She checked it, just before she touched him, and glanced hastily around. Everyone was watching Mrs. Chilton.

"No," she was saying, "I don't mind giving the secret of my chocolate recipe if you will be sure to follow it when I visit you. I roast peanuts and slip off the skins, then pound them in a mortar. You blend the powdered peanuts with boiled milk and sugar and you have — what you're drinking."

"But how do you get the sugar, Mrs. Chilton?"

"Now while you're in good humor," she laughed, "I want you to listen to a new poem on our war. Lizzie Branch has agreed to recite it. Sip your chocolate and enjoy your cake, but do be still. This is my treat of the evening."

"Poetry?" Brose turned to Mildred, frowning.

"Sh-h. Look at Lizzie. She's beautiful . . . and listen."

The words of the poem made no impression. Lizzie's voice was a sad melody for her sudden sense of loss. Until her mood had been broken, this evening had seemed to Mildred a beginning, a new and richer opening of their life. Now she saw it as a suggestion of all they had missed during their two months. Brose had been too weak to leave his home until the last two weeks, and then it had turned bitter cold. The nights were moonless and the dark streets were unsafe with ruffians swarming them, those shapes that loomed out of shadows with swift fingers wielding knife or garrote, or even club, such as had struck down old St. George Paxton, bearing home the money from the sale of his watch. . . .

"You listen," Brose whispered, "this is good."

How had he known she was n't? The communication between them deepened her sense of loss, but she listened to Lizzie, to share with him the poem: —

"Matted and damp are the curls of gold,
Kissing the snow of that fair young brow;
Pale are the lips of delicate mould —
Somebody's darling is dying now . . .
Somebody wept when he marched away,
Looking so handsome, brave and grand.
Somebody's kiss on his forehead lay;
Somebody clung to his parting hand.

"Somebody's watching and waiting for him,
Yearning to hold him again to her heart;
And there he lies with his blue eyes dim,
And the smiling, childlike lips apart.
Tenderly bury the fair young dead,
Pausing to drop on his grave a tear;
Carve on a wooden slab o'er his head —
'Somebody's darling slumbers here!'"

There was a long silence. Then the guests came out of their seats as if by signal. Voices started up and everyone moved toward Lizzie.

"Brose," Mildred whispered, "go back and get your overcoat and meet me in the hall. I must get out of here."

No one noticed as they made their way into the hall. The room upstairs was empty and chilly. The fire burned low. She drew her cloak over her calico dress and for one moment she stared at her made-over bonnet in the mirror. How much of what stirred her was revealed in her face? Her eyes, staring back, looked fevered. She whirled away and hurried down the stairs. Brose, in his caped overcoat, was talking with Mrs. Chilton. Mrs. Chilton swooped toward her, brimming with good humor.

"It was lovely, Mrs. Chilton," Mildred said quickly. "I'm sorry we must leave early, but Sergeant Kirby is recuperating, you know."

"Of course I know," she grinned slyly, "you must take good care of him. I'm so glad you could come . . ." she turned to Brose . . . "and please come to see me whenever you are in Richmond. We're very proud of the men in our Bloody First and Pickett's Virginia Division."

"The men are very proud of their ladies, Mrs. Chilton."

"You're one to be proud of, my boy. Now you two run along with none of your fancy speeches. I must see what I can do with the wolves in there. They've eaten every particle of my cake. Good night."

The wind blew cold between the stone-slab wings of the steps outside. Bare lindens swayed against the night sky. In the silence the bell over the depot tolled. Gray men were shuffling through the cold city. Day after to-morrow he would be one of those nameless men shuffling along some dark street. The end of February had seemed so far away when first they started their afternoon walks last month. Now that it was here, the sense of loss, of waste, that she had suffered at the party grew in her. It was n't that they had missed parties, but the gayety that the party suggested had been denied them. Nights had been denied them!

They walked silently in the echo of their steps on the brick sidewalk. The houses were dark. Across the city, above the river, red sparks streaked the sky from the chimneys of the Tredegar, where time never halted the moulding of guns for the Confederacy. When they reached the iron fence across her yard, she stopped and leaned against it. He stood before her, dark in the long shadow of the tree. Unconsciously, since they had left the Chiltons', she had waited for him to speak. Now she sensed that he was going to let the moment pass. It could n't.

"Brose . . ." she forced out words . . . "I was thinking about you going."

"That 'll do no good."

His low intense voice encouraged her and she said softly: "No, darling, but I was thinking that something about it all is unfinished."

"When did that come to you?" He was almost harsh.

"To-night, at the party, something new seemed to be beginning for us, but everything has been just a beginning that somehow comes to nothing . . ."

"What can it come to?"

She remembered her mother's words and she knew that, as her

mother meant them, they had no meaning. They would never have any when she was close to him. The answer to his question and her mother's was here, in her desire. That gave her the courage to voice her thoughts.

"That's for you to say, Brose," she said simply.

"Hell, you know I want you."

His words, like a blow, crushed everything out of her, leaving only the stunned weakness of their effect.

"Yes," she whispered, "and I want you."

She heard his breath pull in and he swayed toward her. Then he stopped, poised, as though he stood at attention. "You don't know what you're saying. You don't know what you're talking about."

She could n't see his face in the shadow of his hat, but the roughness of his voice was enough. "I don't know much about this," she said, "but you do." Her hands groped over his arms, upward.

"I don't know anything about *this*!" His hands reached upward and closed over hers, drawing them off his arm. She had never felt a grip so strong. "You just don't understand things."

The pain in her fingers vibrated all through her in a muffled ecstasy. It frightened her, but she would n't be scared now. This was why her mother worried, begged her to think of to-morrow. The fever in her veins wanted no to-morrows, no questions; it wanted only his released desire to cool the fever. She felt that desire of his beating at her. His dark passion, which nothing had ever curbed, throbbed now against the cruel bit of his own making.

"Brose, I understand all I need to . . . that is, I'll do anything you want me to."

He flung her hands out of his. "Then don't say any more. Go on in your house."

"No."

"Damn it, yes! Go on, quick, and leave me here."

He looked as though he might strike her and she backed away from his fury. The gate was at her back. "Not like this, Brose. I won't see you again, except a little while to-morrow."

"Better for you if you never see me again."

"Oh, Brose, my darling . . ." She moved toward him.

His hand was hard against her shoulder and she saw him make a quick movement. She heard the gate latch rise and the gate creaked open. The hard hand on her shoulder pushed. She stumbled backward. The gate brushed against her cloak and slammed. She stood there, trembling.

"Jesus!" he said. "Jesus. Is this what love does to a man?"

She could n't answer. There were no words, no thoughts in her. Down by the Bird-in-Hand district a muffled shot cracked. In the distance came the faint echo of Winder's guard pounding the pavement fast. Then his voice came, thick and hoarse.

"Mildred, I'd feel like one of those thugs or Yankee agents if I did n't leave you now."

"You're changing, Brose."

"It's times. Since I've been a top sergeant I've talked with officers and I know how this war is growing. They're making bigger plans than ever to capture Richmond. In this next campaign they'll use all their man power and money to get the city. You don't understand the dangers. Anything might happen."

"Let anything happen, but don't you change. Don't let love do that to you. Let love change me to make me like you."

He was silent and she heard her own labored breathing.

"Mildred, you're just not like me and that's all there is to it."

"So what are you going to do?"

"Get out of here . . . Good night." He spun around.

"Are n't you going to kiss me good-night?" It was a cry.

"No." His voice floated out of the shadows. Already he was a dusky form, with shoulders swaying away from her. His heels clicked hard on the bricks. She watched him until there was no more to watch, except the empty street. In the whole city there was no sound. She turned slowly and looked at her house, its square lines blocked against the sky. A low light glowed through the glass fanfare above the door.

Her mother had left that light for her. Long ago, it seemed, in

another life, her father had left that light for her. It had been another life when her father lived. The gentle voices of his friends sang through the house that was now silent. Other young girls, as she had been then, laughed gayly and danced under the shining chandelier and arched their eyes over fans, and on the balcony she had kissed Willie Kennard and believed she had touched romance. Willie Kennard was killed at Seven Pines. She had seen his dead body. And the night before he was killed, her body had been bruised by Brose Kirby on a balcony, while Chester Cary stood guard at the door. . . . What was it in her that turned her from that other life, that exiled her from her own kind? The war had caught them all up, but she alone had embraced the war, had given herself to its violence and uncertainties. She alone of all the people who had ever lived in that house, or who had eaten or drunk or danced or talked in its rooms, had offered herself to a man on the dark street . . . and had him turn his back, and leave her standing here in the bitterness of empty desire. The night wind cut through her cloak and she shivered. She walked toward the light in the silent house. Somehow she had to find a life that would quiet the tumult the black 'un had brought with him.

CHAPTER XVIII

"Tell A. P. Hill to prepare for action. . . . Pass the infantry to the front. . . . Let us cross over the river and rest under the shade of the trees. . . ."—*General Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson, as he lay dying*

Elizabeth had loved, since she could remember, to walk among the homes around Fourth and Fifth Street. There lived the great tobacco men: Harris and Ginter and Bransford, Walthall and Scott, Childrey and Taylor, and Enders and Scott. In the springtime her favorites were those on Main and Cary, where the rear gardens were built on elevations above the sloping streets and she could see the flowers. She liked best the big, square, red brick house on the corner of Fifth and Main, with magnolias in the front lawn and high-pitched, double balconies overlooking the rear garden. Next she liked the Barrett house on Fifth and Cary, square and gray with the narrow white porch and two columns in front, and in the back the highest balconies of all and the tallest garden wall, for there Cary Street was a steep hill. Then, set deep in its lawn of tall oaks, was the Allan house where the poet Edgar Poe had lived, and down on Main the Caskie and the Boucher.

It was the life they evoked that moved her. She lived in the core of Richmond, the genesis of its mood, when she breathed in the atmosphere of sweet-smelling flowers and the cooling shade of tall trees, of rambler roses climbing the old bricks of garden walls and ivy reaching toward the dormer windows of sloping roofs, of ladies and gentlemen on the upper balconies cooling in the river breeze. There lived the long memories that weaved and reweaved into the present: of the first fort by the Falls, the first cluster of farmhouses

by the riverbank, the first tobacco warehouses and bright-painted taverns, the liquid voices of negroes singing at their work, and the cursing voices of barge drivers at the wharves; of the first checker-board lots on Church Hill's red-clay streets, the frame story-and-a-half Queen Anne houses, the negroes drying clothes on the grassy banks of Shockoe Creek, the soft foreign voices of South American sailors whose ships brought coffee for flour, and the Tidewater voices yelling at the Fairfield races; of the cobblestoned streets climbing west beyond Shockoe Creek, the three-story brick houses forming the new Court End of town, the coon-skinned mountaineers with mule packs and the silk-ruffled dandies from the English ships, and the country voice of Patrick Henry ringing over the churchyard graves from St. John's white-frame Episcopal Church; of the hollow voice of drums marching the First Virginia Regiment off to meet the British redcoats and the singing voice of bugles marching the First Virginia off to meet the Yankee bluecoats, and of the golden voices of forgotten ladies who transmitted all the memories, from huddling in the old fort during Indian raids to cheering the president of their third country at the Spotswood Hotel. *In Dixieland I'll take my stand . . .*

To-day the ghostly voices were silent. No memories wove into this April morning. Where Main Street dipped downhill many of the houses were shuttered, with death inside, and others were open to strangers, foreign faces with unfamiliar names. Within herself, Elizabeth felt their broken mood. Her own life, like theirs, seemed suspended between a lost past and an uncertain future. Chester had belonged to the old world. What was he now? What was she?

When she reached the stores across the street from the Spotswood Hotel, where the business section began, she felt that the life suggested by those houses symbolized the life of Richmond. All other lives had somehow been built around that centre, which was an ideal and a base. Now there was nothing to look up to. Everything was changed. The old English-Virginia names, associated in her memory with Richmond as her home, were gone from most of the

stores. Gone too were the familiar gentlemen, in their beavers and frock coats, who linked the past with the present through the long memories of her kinspeople. *So you're Charles Kirby's little girl. . . . What's your name? . . . Well, Elizabeth, I've danced with your mother many's the time at Corinthian Hall. . . .* None of these hurrying strangers had danced with her mother or laughed with her father in the yard of Masonic Hall. None of these slowly moving men, hairy and dirty and dusty gray, with slings and bandages and crutches and sticks, would care anything about the little girl of Judy and Charles Kirby. She was a stranger on this bustling street, splattered with red auction flags fluttering in the April breeze.

She hated to enter the unfamiliar stores just as she shrank from entering a room full of strangers. At Ninth Street, Robinson and Adams were auctioneering off a secondhand dinner set, painted blue and gilt-edged, and behind the bellowing man in a wilted collar and brocaded waistcoat some kegs of butter stood on a second-hand Brussels carpet. They would have no tallow here. The auctioneer of Dunlop, Moncure, stood among tins of bicarbonate of soda and bottles of Hennessy brandy and yelled for attention to their blockade goods. They would have no tallow for her candles. Gaudily dressed women strolled out of the Linwood House, arrogance on their painted faces and shrewdness in their eyes. They didn't have to make candles. She watched them, awed, almost envious. They were more at home in this Richmond than she. The next windows displayed candles, homemade too, she saw. She was frightened to think of many other people selling candles. Another window was bright with bonnets, stuck on top of cavalry boots. She stopped and stared at them. Inside, the auctioneer held up pastel-colored organdies out of a big case.

"Fresh from Europe! Just up from Wilmington! These beautiful organdies that came through the blockade—"

She hurried down the street. The windows swam before her eyes, piled with prayer books and playing cards, umbrellas and rifles, cartridges and groceries. On the sidewalk, near a doorway, a barrel

of flour had a sign of \$100 and a canteen on top. A harsh voice croaked from a store, punctuated by thumps. A fat man in a frock coat and striped trousers pounded four feather beds to exhibit their softness.

"From one of the best families in Richmond . . . little used . . ."

She moved around barrels of molasses with "\$15 per gal" scrawled on the wood.

"Smell of it, gentlemen, smell of the ineffable fragrance of this fine soap, made by the delicate hands of one of Richmond's fairest ladies, perfumed as she would perfume herself for her gallant Southern knight. Step up and convince yourself by a sniff, right from a lady's bood-wah."

Elizabeth stared at the lavender cakes, neatly moulded, and thought of the misshapen lumps Marie made by boiling lime and salt with the kitchen scrapings of grease and ashes. They would laugh if she asked for tallow.

"Right from the Valley of Virginia, the first crop of real, native, home-grown apples. Only twenty-five dollars a bushel. Stock up now, ladies and gentlemen, before the speculators raise the prices."

Behind the auctioneer an odd assortment of boxes were stacked. They might have tallow. She tried to screw up her courage to enter. She must get some to-day. The auctioneer suddenly broke off and cocked his curly head to one side. Elizabeth heard shouting in the distance. The other voices along the street grew quiet and the swelling shout was the only sound. The customers plunged through the door. Before she could retreat, she was caught in the midst of sweating men. They looked anxiously up and down the street. The tocsin had n't rung to call out the local defense troops. The raging voices seem to roll up from Cary Street. Then she heard glass smashed. Someone screamed. She was hurried along with the crowd.

Across the street government clerks ran out on the steps of the Customshouse. At the corner a man yelled down from his perch on the iron-grille rail of the American Hotel balcony, where he was polishing the big globes. No one answered him. Elizabeth was

pushed into Eleventh Street. Down the hill, where Cary Street crossed, the intersection was choked with women. They crept along in a solid mass. They were the shouters and their voices echoed and reëchoed in the narrow street canyon. Elizabeth was carried down the street by the surge of men. The familiar trembling of fear weakened her and breath came in short gasps.

Then she was at Cary Street, jostled and bumped in the milling mob. She glimpsed the pack of women. Their clothes were tattered and torn, their hair hung disheveled above bestial faces. Her panic shook her as she stared at them, and their animal cries beat at her. Glass was strewn all over the flagstone crossing. Drays and carts swayed in the midst of the women and they shoved and fought over the piles in them. She glimpsed hams and flour barrels and molasses kegs and slabs of pork. The last of the women passed in front of her.

Beyond them she saw an aproned man across the street trying to close a store door in their faces. They screamed and snarled and a small boy waved a hatchet at the shopkeeper. He fell back and the women swarmed over him into the store.

The main mob ebbed down Cary Street, leaving solitary women, drooping, like waste left by a tide. The street was littered around them. The stores were wrecked. In a broken doorway a gray-bearded shopkeeper moaned. Women started to come out of the store Elizabeth had seen them enter. They came singly, stood a moment, looking around with wild expressions. Some followed the mob. A bent, grayed old woman staggered toward Elizabeth. The men in front of her gave way and stared at the woman. She clutched loaves of bread and a handful of salt herring, and glared out of wide eyes, fever-bright and glassy. She panted like a dog. Dank gray hair tumbled from under her bonnet, half off her head. She came through the lane straight toward Elizabeth, and Elizabeth recognized her family's former dressmaker. "Mrs. Fitchett," she said weakly. "Mrs. Fitchett!"

The woman stopped and slowly her gaze focused. She shifted as though she might be ashamed. Then she lowered her eyes.

"What are those women after, Mrs. Fitchett?"

"*Bread!*"

Elizabeth recoiled. "But surely you 're not breaking into stores?"

"We broke in the commissary store," she muttered.

A big-boned woman, thin and sallow, her lips drawn back over her teeth, plunged through the men, facing them defiantly. A pair of boots were tied around her neck. Something shone in her hand.

"But they 're breaking open stores and that woman has stolen something."

"I cain't he'p what they 're doin'. They 're so hongry I reckon they 've gone crazy." She faced Elizabeth doggedly.

"But what started them? How could —"

"I reckon 't was that explosion at Brown's Island. A lot was killed and hurt theah and they 're desp'rit. Oh, Lord Jesus, look! Heah comes the City Battalion."

Elizabeth turned. Bayonets gleamed in the morning sun.

"Foh Gawd," Mrs. Fitchett moaned, "whut 'd my boy Joe say if he knew the militia had to be called out agin his own mother?" She raised the hand holding the fish to set her bonnet on straight. Her torn sleeve fell from her arm. The grayed skin was drawn tight over the bone. "You won' tell Mistuh Brose, will you? Joe 'd think hard of me if 'n he knew and he's all I got. You won't tell, will you?"

Elizabeth shook her head. The exposed arm had made her sick.

The old woman started to speak again. Then she closed tight her lips and defiance replaced the shame. She whirled and went scuttling up Eleventh Street. Elizabeth half turned. Men ran toward her. From behind and around her men and women of the mob scattered up the hill. Their shouts shook her. *Riot, riot . . . close the stores . . . riot . . . going into Main . . .* She just stood there, weak and terrified, while the crowd eddied about her.

She turned back when the City Battalion marched past. She wanted to appeal to them. Not one grim face moved. They were advancing on their first enemy. When the guide sergeant at the end of the column walked stiffly by, she saw that she stood alone

in the débris. Then she started up Eleventh Street, almost stumbling in her weakness. Her legs would not steady. Main Street looked like Sunday. The stores were tightly barred, but glass was sprinkled on the sidewalk and some windows were broken. The mob had passed on. She hurried on toward Bank Street. She heard their shouting up the hill.

Government clerks talked quietly in the Bank Street entrance of the Customhouse and there was one white-haired old gentleman who belonged in one of her favorite houses. A trim cavalry colonel halted his horse in front of him. The colonel was one of President Davis's aides.

"It's all over, Mr. Paxton," he called cheerfully. "The President tried talking with them, but one of them threw a loaf of bread at him. Then Governor Letcher threatened to have the City Battalion fire into them and they went off, sullen as animals. I did n't know we had such rirraff in the city."

"What you don't know, apparently," the old aristocrat said coldly, "is that hunger makes rirraff of us all."

The officer flushed. He spun his horse around and galloped up Bank Street. Elizabeth looked closely at the old gentleman as she passed him. Mr. Paxton . . . that must be Uncle Virginius' friend. If Uncle Virginius could be a friend of such a fine gentleman of that world suggested by the houses, and Brose could be Mildred Wade's sweetheart, why should she think that Chester's life kept them apart? She climbed the steps into Capitol Square. Negro nurses talked while the children they watched played near them. The nurses were glancing at a pale young woman who leaned back on a bench, as though she might be sick. Elizabeth glanced at her. Her poor dress was torn and her cheek was bruised. She was n't sick; she was weak to the point of fainting. In her lap she held a man's shoe.

The shock of the bread riot, which had gripped her in a paralysis, broke into its horrible details and she saw again each hunger-crazed woman. They flashed before her vision like colored slides. Their bestial screams rang again through her brain. She forgot her

morning errand, forgot their need of tallow, forgot Chester, everything, in a sudden frenzy to be home, where she could shut out the visions, where she felt safe, where things were familiar.

Elizabeth lifted the straw she had plaited off the bowl and held it to the light. For some reason it looked less like a hat than those the other girls made. The lack of style did n't explain it; there was little of that in anyone's hat, or anything else. Somehow the crown appeared to be misshapen and the brim flopped. She took the strip of rose taffeta she had cut from the dress that had split. She started to weave it around the base of the crown. That might pull it into shape. Looking over the hat, through the window, she saw the gardens behind the Grace Street houses in full May bloom. There should n't be lilacs now. Her fingers grew still.

"Elizabeth!" Her mother's sharp voice startled her. "For heaven's sakes, can't you stop looking like you were at your own funeral?" Her head bent over the raw potato she was slicing, her eyes glared under drawn black brows.

"I was thinking about the farmer protesting when he sold Papa the straw, and saying he was against vittels being wasted for prettifying when folks were starving. I don't feel right to be putting ribbons on hats when I remember those poor starving women I saw."

"Then stop remembering them. It's been a month since you saw the bread riot and anybody'd think you were one of them yourself."

"I can't stop remembering it. I keep seeing Mrs. Fitchett's skinny arm when her sleeve fell back."

"If you want to think of such things, think of your own father. If he had n't worked himself to the bone, we'd have been in the riot ourselves. It does seem to me the least you could do would be try and make him cheerful."

"Judy, let the child be," Granny said. "It's Chester she's pining for."

"But Chester is coming to-morrow, is n't he, Elizabeth?" Mrs.

Kirby finished slicing the potato and laid the paper-thin disks on a bread tray with others that were drying.

"Yes 'm," she murmured.

"Are you going to greet him with that Patience-on-a-monument look?"

"I don't care how I'm going to greet him." She threw the hat away from her. "I wish — I wish I was n't going to see him at all!"

Granny stopped rocking. Marie looked in from the kitchen.

"Anybody call me?"

"No," Mrs. Kirby said grimly, "but you can take these potatoes. Most of them are dry. And after you toast these, grind them finer than you did before. That last batch was the poorest excuse for coffee I ever drank."

"Hit's all poh, if'n you ask me." Marie picked up the tray. "Ain't fitten foh a hawg ter drink. Thet's whut the matter with thet chile. You git yoh pappy foh ter bring some sassafras 'n' I'll make you some tea whut'll bring you 'round. Springtime powerful hawd on young gals —"

"All times are hard on Elizabeth," Mrs. Kirby said. "Now what's the matter with Chester?"

"Nothing, Mother, nothing. It's not him. It's just — everything."

"Hit's the springtime," Marie said. "Sassafras tea —"

"All right, Marie," she said wearily, "I'll get Papa to bring some."

"You do 'at, honey." She stalked out mumbling, frowning at the potato slices. "Wuss'n 'at Cawnfederate cawffee."

"Has Chester done something?" her mother asked quietly.

"Oh no, nobody's done anything. It's just me, just that everything in Richmond is so upset, and — oh! — I don't know . . ."

"Bad times now," Granny croaked, rocking placidly again; "worse coming."

"It's your croaking that sets her off," Mrs. Kirby said vehemently. "These are the best times we've had since the war began. Everybody says that Chancellorsville was the greatest victory we've ever won."

"Soldier victories," Granny sniffed. "They're not helping us. Look at these here cavalry raids all the time . . . this Stoneman, come a-stealing and a-burning right outside Richmond last week, scaring the poor folks out of their senses."

"That's what they're trying to do — scare the women so we'll want to give up. They know they can't beat our army. This Hooker of theirs is about the tenth general that Lee has ruined. And Virginius told me that Lee did n't have Longstreet and two of his divisions. With them Hooker would've been destroyed."

"Yes, Mother, but how is that helping Richmond?"

"Oh, for the Lord's sake, Elizabeth, I've heard Chester tell you that they'd let us alone if we ran another army of theirs out of Virginia like we did Pope's and McClellan's." Mrs. Kirby broke off suddenly and looked fixedly at her. Elizabeth stared down at the figures on her cotton dress. Then her mother said with a quiet steadiness: "Elizabeth, are you afraid that Chester does n't love you?"

"No!" She looked up and tried to read her mother's expression.

"Then what are you afraid of?" Her mother did n't seem to be thinking that Chester did not love her.

"I don't know."

"But you are afraid of something."

"I'm afraid of everything." She fought back tears.

"I know what it is," Granny cackled, "and the springtime makes it worse. You've gotten to the age when you need a man to lean on."

Elizabeth turned to the old lady, but she was rocking and staring out the window, as she did the whole day long.

"I believe Mamma is right," her mother said slowly. "Yes, that's what has been in your craw all these past weeks." The impatience and repressed anger had lifted from her and her eyes softened, as they used to so often, and now only for Brose. "Is that right, Elizabeth?"

She shook her head. She knew she would cry if she tried to speak.

"What bright eyes she has," Granny said. "Would you know if Chester was to walk in this minute?"

Something in her grandmother's voice and expression suddenly quieted her. She stared at the old lady, not daring to speak.

"I thought so," Granny went on. "Well, he is about to walk in. I just see him ride up."

All at once Elizabeth was standing and her heart was pounding and she felt a strange, breathless buoyance, more exciting than anything she had ever known, and more scary. Her mother rose quickly and came toward her.

"Elizabeth, my child, I reckon we have n't looked after you very well lately. I should have seen this, because Mamma is right. Chester loves you and you need to depend on him. Go to him and you won't be so nervous and so—so upset all the time. You're twenty years old now, and—"

The bell tinkled back in the kitchen. She jumped. Her mother's hand was on her shoulder. "Now, now, child, don't take on so. You know, we all need to help one another and you can do what you can by being brave and cheerful. Chester will help you to be like that."

"Will he?" The strange buoyance seemed to swell inside her so that she could hardly contain herself.

"Yes, he will, but you must n't talk to him about bad times in the city. Don't talk about the bread riot. Maybe he has n't heard of it—it was kept out of the papers. Talk to him about the great victory at Chancellorsville, talk of cheerful things, and show him that you believe we will win our freedom. You do and he will make you brave."

Her mother stepped away from her as Marie opened the door. She turned toward it, feeling light and glowing and ready to rush toward him. He moved into the doorway and paused, limp in his dusty gray clothes. His face, roughened by a stubble, was heavy with sorrow, while his eyes, usually so grave and strong, looked at them as though his heart were breaking. She checked her movement. The look of him was like a knife through her eager buoyance.

"Chester . . ." When Mrs. Kirby's voice faltered in the silence, Elizabeth was aware that they had all been standing there, as if turned to stone.

He drew in a deep breath and spoke with an effort. "Good afternoon, Mrs. Kirby, and Mrs. Fitzhugh, and —" his stricken eyes moved to her — "and Elizabeth."

She tried to speak, but she was numbed. She could only stare at him. She saw that his eyes were wet. He lowered his head and then his muffled voice sounded, very low.

"Stonewall Jackson is dead."

All day the crowds waited in the hot sun of Capitol Square. They were quiet and patient. There was little talking. The only movement was men wiping their sweaty faces and ladies gently fanning. When the slow roll of the "Death March" moaned from Grace Street, the crowds grew silent. Men removed their hats and ladies ceased fanning.

Across the driveway, Uncle Virginius leaned against the huge stone wing that flanked the Capitol steps. St. George Paxton stood beside him, glancing about. Uncle Virginius stared straight ahead, sightless. He had lost weight and his hair was turning white. Both of their black suits were worn and shiny.

Hardly anyone wore fine clothes. The packs of poor women, on the hill below the driveway, wore patched dresses or those beyond patching. They were all clean though, their faces scrubbed, and they were weighted with their sorrow as poor people are. Farther up the driveway, Elizabeth saw Mildred Wade, her hair golden in the sun. Even in her sadness now there was aloofness, a suggestion of cool arrogance. What in that lovely girl responded to the dark recklessness of Brose? The older woman beside her, dressed in mourning, had an air about her too. She must be Mrs. Wade. She had been pretty once, but now she was drawn. Elizabeth felt that never had Mrs. Wade possessed the passion she had sensed in

Mildred Wade on that long-ago afternoon. Elizabeth had been shy then, fearful of Chester. She turned to him now, as if for reassurance. He nodded toward the entrance.

The crowd stirred and a whisper sighed through them like a hot wind. Ragged men in columns of fours marched through the Capitol gates. Their rifles were reversed on their shoulders.

"They're two regiments from Brose's division," Chester whispered.

"Pickett's?"

He nodded. "All Virginians. Look at their faces. Great fighters."

She could n't see much but tangled beards, and eyes bright and shining like their rifles. They wore the yellow-gray homespun such as her mother made, and some wore Yankee trousers and some civilian broadcloth. Few wore jackets except the officers. The gold braid shone on theirs. Tears welled up in her as she heard the shuffle of their broken shoes, and she remembered the first parade she had watched with Chester, when the uniforms were new and the bands played. *Then I wish I was in Dixie . . . Away, away . . .*

"There's General Pickett!"

Long moustaches curled down around his mouth and dark hair flowed in ringlets over his shoulders. His uniform glistened with gold braid and brass buttons and his eyes were the brightest of all. Behind him, heavy horses plodded, pulling rumbling gun carriages. She recognized the uniforms of the Richmond Fayette Artillery above the sullen glint of the guns. The men on the horses and those perched, cross-armed and stiff, on the caisson boxes stared straight ahead. A troop of cavalry came after them, the slow cloppety-clop of their walking horses echoing in the silence.

Then the crowd sighed and swayed forward. The carriage moved slowly. The black plumes nodded, and danced long shadows across the Confederate flag on top the coffin. A soldier walked behind, leading a sorrel horse. The horse was saddled and boots hung between a field-glass case and a saddle holster. The sorrel's

pointed ears stood up straight, as though he listened for Stonewall's voice.

An open carriage followed. A sick man leaned back among the cushions with downcast eyes. Lines burrowed deep in the sad, pallid face of Jefferson Davis. Men in black walked behind. She recognized the shrewd, bland face of Secretary of State Benjamin, framed in his curly black hair and jaw-line beard, and the gaunt, dead-skinned War Secretary Seddon. Other men looked important, but she had no interest in them. She thought of the body in the carriage. The horses had turned and the carriage moved alongside the steps.

Officers in dress uniforms stepped behind the carriage. She recognized the long-bearded, cold-eyed, burly general as Longstreet, whom Brose called "Old Pete." The officers were lifting out the box. Around her the people wept softly. Chester nodded toward a stern officer who took hold of the end.

"That's General Kemper, commander of Brose's brigade."

Beads of sweat glistened in the moustache of Brose's brigadier. He moved slowly up the steps and the box tilted as the other officers lifted it. The weeping deepened. The pallbearers passed through the doors of the Capitol. The crowd waited.

"Do you want to go in and look at him?" She shook her head, keeping her lips tight to hold back the sobs welling up in her. "Shall we go?" She nodded, and took his arm.

Two officers parted the broad doors and held them open. It was the signal. The crowd moved slowly, in a solid bowed mass, up the wide steps. There were thousands. For hours they would file past the bier and look down at the still face that had led their husbands and lovers and sons and brothers over the green Valley roads, over the red-clay Tidewater roads, over the hard Maryland roads, across many rivers and many creeks, and last over the dusty roads through the wilderness of Chancellorsville; and many who had followed him were dead, but none had ever known defeat. *There stands Jackson like a stone wall. . . . Rally around the Virginians. . . .* Then the tears came.

"Oh, Chester," she cried, "what will we do without him?"

"We'll just have to fight harder." He sounded unsteady.

"But was n't he Lee's best lieutenant?"

He nodded and drew her arm closer to him. She saw his delicately moulded lips drawn tight. They moved through the press of bowed heads creeping toward the Capitol, and passed out of the gates.

"General Lee has trained others, though," he said suddenly, in a cracked, high-pitched voice. "When we started we had only civilians, like myself, and a few young officers from the old army. But General Lee has trained them!"

"But will any ever be as great as Stonewall Jackson?"

"I reckon no one will ever be like Old Jack . . ." He faltered a moment, then his voice rose in almost boyish defiance. "But man for man they're the best army there ever was in the world! They can march farther and fight harder on less than any men the world ever saw."

"Oh, Chester!" A rush of tenderness swept all else away. "You are still young, are n't you?"

He turned to her and gentleness softened him, but he did not smile. He looked as though he could never smile. "You're still the little one—my sweet little one. And I'm not so young that I can't look after you—if you'll let me."

She leaned close against his wiry arm and felt the first smile in long memory welling up from her heart. "Chester . . . I want you to look after me."

He smiled then, quickly, deepening the new, thin lines around his mouth, but there was a glow on him such as she remembered on that far-away spring.

"Ah, that's what I'll devote my life to. Do you know what a beautiful country we'll have when we get rid of these varmints? Virginia will be like it was in the days of Washington and Jefferson, before the Northern industrialists ran the country. It will be the most wonderful place on earth, Elizabeth."

"I don't care about the Yankees. I only care about you."

"You must care about our driving them away. I can't really look after you until we do that."

"All right, then I want you to drive every last one out of Virginia."

"I'll do that within . . . within one month. Now don't say I'm young. You must believe that what I told you about our army is true. Do you?"

"Yes, Chester."

"Well, this is true too. I know it."

"I know it's true, Chester. I know you'll do it." Her tears were forgotten and she wanted to swing on his arm.

"And then I'll come back for you, my little sweet," he said.

CHAPTER XIX

"My dear Mr. Slidell: You will doubtless be pleased to receive the following communication, which the Emperor charges me to make you confidentially. Mr. L'Huys has written Baron Gros, our Ambassador in London, to sound Lord John Russell on the subject of the recognition of the South, and has authorized him to declare that the Cabinet of the Tuileries is ready to discuss the subject. . . . MOCQUARD."—*Forwarded by Confederate Commissioner Slidell, in France, to Secretary of State Benjamin, June 1863*

"I might 've known you 'd come like this, just as I was building up a life for myself." Mildred huddled low in the worn cushions of the rig. "This was to be my first day at a new hospital. You should n't make me do such things. I should n't let you do them to me."

He looked straight ahead, keeping the horse at its sloppy trot over Main Street's cobblestones. "Maybe," he said, "you did n't know you made me desert the army—just when we were starting on an invasion."

She sat up and turned to face him. "An invasion! When?"

"Pickett's division is moving north now, for Culpeper Courthouse."

"But . . . deserted . . ."

"Just for the day. I had a pair of Yankee cavalry boots I was going to sell, but I traded them to the officer of the day for a special pass. The train will get me back with my regiment to-morrow."

Still he did not move his head. The floppy rolled brim of his flat-crowned hat shaded his face and she could read no expression. She slowly sank back on the cushions, feeling limp.

"Where 're you going?"

"Pennsylvania. We're going to provision the army. The Yanks cleaned out Virginia."

"But with Hooker's army here, why — he could take Richmond."

"He could, but he won't. He'll have to follow us. We'll get both these armies out of the state before the people are starved. We want to counteract their siege of Vicksburg, too."

She remembered that other invasion from which her father had not returned. Now, all her plans for her separate life were scattered by the immensity of another invasion. The rig moved past the saloons and small stores of Cash Corners. Slatternly women hung out of the dormer windows and the men, lounging in the doorways, appeared to be the sweepings of the world. Down at Cary Street she glimpsed the big, bleak, brick Libby Prison, dotted with pale blurs at the barred windows.

"You need n't be afraid for Richmond," he said. "I know I was last winter. Then I thought of the criminals and Yankee prisoners who might be turned loose on the city. But since then we've wrecked their spring campaign. The local defense troops at the breastworks now are just there against an emergency. There won't be any. The Yanks'll forget all about Richmond when their own mangy hides are in danger."

She nodded. She had n't worried about Richmond. The other evening at dinner St. George Paxton had told them he felt more hope for their independence than at any time since the war began. "England and France need cotton," he said, "and I'm sure that a successful invasion now would bring us recognition." She heard that everywhere; it was in the air. Even in her home the atmosphere was lighter.

What she feared was the consequences of the invasion to him, and to her. During the spring she had once again, painfully and tediously, evolved a life of her own. She had put back together all the pieces scattered by their winter month together. She had not tried to forget him this time. She knew she loved him too much for that. She had tried only to recapture some of her former assurance and independence. Then, to-day, he appeared at the front

door. He grinned easily and said, "How about a ride in the country?" And she had come, like a little dog when its master whistled. She could n't help it, nor could she ever help it, and that's what scared her.

The street curved toward the river and she saw the long, wooden sheds of the old wharf, where many times she had waited for a boat. For a moment the color of that lost life was evoked: when they sailed down the James, when the Wades lived at Kensington, and they had friends in the old river plantations. Around the wharf now was the swarming movement of the navy shipyard. Crates littered the open space between the sheds and the street, iron stacks reared at the water's edge, and men worked on a half-finished gunboat. Across the river, where the green trees used to shade the water, dots moved among the new timber houses in a clearing, and metal clanged. In the middle of the river the Flag of Truce boat churned the muddy water, its deck lined with exchanged Yankee prisoners on their way to City Point. These were the things that made her life to-day. There were no more trips down the James, where the Yankee gunboats lay. There was no old life at all, nothing but what she could find in this man beside her.

"Brose, why did you come to-day?"

"I might be gone a long time in a strange country and I wanted to tell you that I love you." He did n't look at her as he spoke. "You see, I thought I loved you when I first saw you. I did n't know anything about love then, because I'd never loved anybody. Now I do, because—because I think of you more than I do of myself. I wanted you to know that before I go North."

From depths where she had never known feeling, response welled up, choking and muffled. "But, Brose . . . what shall I say? What can I say?"

"Don't say anything. I just wanted you to know." He laid the whip harder on the mangy hide and the bony horse, startled, lunged forward.

She released a long sigh. Somehow the old sense of missing was still here; again they shared emotions which would not be finished.

Love, it seemed, always strained for more, for something that it lacked. The houses of Rocketts fell behind and they jogged up a winding hill toward Williamsburg Stage Road. The rich, June fullness of the countryside rolled out before her. It was cooling, like a wet cloth on her head. It was as though she had been stifled in suffocating heat and a river breeze blew cold on her. Her breath came easily and it seemed that she had not breathed so in a long time.

"Do you know this is the first time I've been out of Richmond in two years? Everyone is afraid to drive around the country any more. Oh, it's beautiful out here. I'd forgotten how good the country air tasted. In the city I've been living without anything happening . . . just waiting all the time, like an old woman waiting for death. . . . It's wonderful to see trees again. I don't care if the woods are filled with Yankees, if a hundred of them are waiting at the top of the hill to pounce on us. I'm not afraid of anything when I'm with you."

"Not even me?"

"Least of all you." She laughed. "Won't it be wonderful when all the Yankees are out of Virginia and we can drive through the country like this all the time and see laughing faces again? And you and I will be together like this."

"I don't know about like this all the time." He was more serious than she had ever seen him. "I'd be a different fellow, day in and day out."

The road straightened. Green leaves closed over them in a shaded tunnel, sweet with honeysuckle.

"That's what I want, Brose," she said slowly, "to see you day in and day out. You think I need the life I used to have. I only try to go back to that when you're not with me. That's what scares me when you return suddenly. It jerks me out of my safe, dull corner. It takes me a while to get used to you, and then . . . then I never want you to go away any more."

"I'm glad you finally came out of your corner. I'd begun to think you were n't glad to see me." He still glanced ahead, as they emerged from the woods on to the broad dirt Williamsburg Stage Road.

Tilled fields stretched across a tilted table of land toward the horizon. The life of the soil—haystacks and furrowed ground, a slowly moving ox team in the distance—spread before her. She felt closer to the roots of their own living. A quiet grew within her. She seemed free of all the makeshifts and rebellions of her living.

A shout startled her. Right ahead, where the tollgates had been, the ground rose in a gun barbette. In the scooped-out hollow between the flanking mounds of earth behind the breastwork, pale clerks in the new uniforms of the local defense troops looked up from their polishing of a bronze Napoleon. A young boy stopped in the midst of cleaning out a swab bucket and gaped at them. An anxious officer was running toward the road.

"Are n't you scared of the Yankees out yonder?"

"The Yankees are scared of me," Brose yelled at him.

The officer jerked to a halt, mouth open. *Heh-heh-heh . . .* The liquid laughter followed her down the road, and their faces, slack with awe. Even the officer had stared in amazed admiration. Pride possessed her. She had seen the respect of those Locals when they looked at a soldier such as none of them would ever be.

"Brose darling, don't you know I'm not the girl you talked to on Gamble's Hill?" Her small fingers, digging into his arm, seemed to be grasping iron. "I've changed, just like you said I would. I've learned what love is, too. I know I never loved before. The flirtations were puny things. I know now what you feel and I . . . I feel the same way."

"Maybe love does different things to a man and to a woman."

"We're not just a man and a woman. We're you and me, not like any people who ever lived before. No woman ever loved a man as I love you."

She saw his brows draw together and shadow his hot black eyes, and they seemed to draw his face in conflict, the bayonet struggling free of the sheath. "Mildred, I told you that night, you don't understand things."

"I don't need to understand anything but my love for you."

"Mildred . . ." He seemed on the verge of an outburst and then

his face closed tight and she felt touching her the passion and the fury he was stifling.

"Hey, theah! Whey you think you goin'?"

Brose pulled away from her. The mood surged back and she felt heavy with its burden. With the blunted awareness of an ill person, she saw a soldier in brown-gray homespun trousers and shirt come running toward the horse. The ripped brim of his colorless hat flapped over one ear. A bayonet gleamed on his bright musket. In the brush on both sides of the road men started up from a low embankment. Some wore the homespun butternut, some the old dusty gray, and some the new slate gray of the local defense troops. They all stared as the grizzled soldier stopped the horse and walked up to the rig. Until he stood at the step, Brose did n't speak. Then he said, low and hard, the way he had spoken to Dennis that night:—

"Who do you think you are, yelling at me like that?"

Stone-gray eyes darted over Brose's worn uniform, paused on the first-sergeant's chevrons, centred on the dark, tight face.

"Wal, sergeant," the soldier said, "this is the last line."

"All right, it's the last line. Thanks for telling me. I'll see you when we come back and I'll let you know if there're any Yanks ahead, so you can go back to your poker game. Giddap." He flicked the reins.

The soldier jumped away from the wheel. He stared up, puzzled and worried. Then, after they had passed him, he yelled: "Heh, sergeant! Theah *are* some Yanks out yonder!"

"If there are," Brose called back, "they're going the other way. Lee's marching north—to Pennsylvania."

Mildred caught a last glimpse of the grizzled face that seemed to have fallen apart. He was standing there, like a scarecrow, in the rising dust. His wild yell burst out when she no longer saw him.

"Lee's marching north—to Pennsylvania!" His yell was caught up, gathering and wailing over the countryside, screaming after her. "Yee-ee-oweee . . . Lee's marching north . . . Yee-he-hee . . ."

The long shout died behind, and they rode in silence. They were beyond the last line. In the lush countryside in the ripening of summer, there was no life but their love. This awareness intensified each moment, distilled each emotion. This time the mood would not break. Brose's low voice stirred through her.

"Here's something I want to show you, Mildred. This breastwork is where our regiment was last year."

"I'd like to see it."

He pulled the horse off the road under the shade of a pine, jumped out, and coiled the reins around a low branch. He helped her down, and he did not look at her. The earth was soft under her feet. Beyond him the ground rose to a sloping mound, covered with pine leaves. Their first constraint settled on them. She followed him toward the breastwork. A pokeberry bush brushed her skirt. She grabbed his arm and forced a smile.

"Look, Brose, let's gather some pokeberries. They'll make ink for me to write you. Mother's been trying to buy some."

"All right, I'll hold my hat."

Her fingers awkwardly pulled at the red berries. Her hands were shaking. He must be sharing her tension. This delay, with its silence, would break his restraint.

"You know," he said, "I can see the spot where Monk Lassiter was killed when we came out to charge at Seven Pines."

"*Seven Pines!*" It was her restraint that broke and she did n't care now. The few crushed berries dropped from her stained fingers as she whirled around. "Is this where you were after that night . . . that night you came to the party where I was?"

He nodded. He was looking at the pine-leaf-covered mound. "Usually I don't remember positions we held, but this was so close to the road and I remember that tall tree there, right behind where Monk was. A sharpshooter must've used it for a guide."

Her eyes were drawn to the breastwork as if expecting to see the dark flow of blood there now. Unconsciously she moved toward it. He had lain there after he had left her, *without a to-morrow*. She heard again the single drum marching men through the rainy

night street. The next day when she had waited with her mother, and heard the thunder of the guns, he had waited here for the call that sent him swarming forward. Her words cried out.

"That might have been you after — after that night."

His face was bared at last.

"You're thinking that might be you again," she said, "any time."

He nodded.

"And you're worried about me, now that you think more of me than of yourself."

He did n't say anything and she could see that he was thinking, trying to speak.

"Oh, Brose, don't you know that something of you has been born in me? Don't you understand that I don't need any to-morrows any more? I don't need anything that you have n't got. I want only what we have together, now!" There was no more strength in her body and she swayed toward him. His arms held her in a vise. His body was rigid. She lifted her head. He was staring over her, his face twisted as if in pain.

"My darling," she murmured, "you know I think of you as a black 'un. Be a black 'un now, Brose. That's what I've been waiting for so long . . . all my life, I reckon . . . that's what I love in you, darling . . ."

His eyes hovered above her, like hawks. Then a shudder seized her and she closed her eyes. The released desire tore her body and she knew the unbearable ecstasy of his passion dark and fierce within her.

Beneath her the ground was soft with pine tags. Above, through the trees, the sun was at high noon.

July-August, 1863

CHAPTER XX

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAMBERSBURG, PA., *June 27th*, 1863

GENERAL ORDERS No. 73

The commanding general has observed with marked satisfaction the conduct of the troops on this march, and . . . considers that no greater disgrace could befall this army, and through it, our whole people, than the perpetration of the barbarous outrages upon the innocent and defenseless, and the wanton destruction of private property, that have marked the course of the enemy in our own country. . . . It must be remembered that we make war only upon armed men. . . .

— *R. E. Lee, General*

The column straggled out the whole five miles from the Meadow Bridges to where the Virginia Central tracks bordered the northern outskirts of Richmond. Five days they had marched and four nights they had slept on the ground. They were beet-red, blistered, footsore, and sick. The sun beat down on them like the breath out of a forge. The air was as hot and as thick as steam. Flies as big as bees swarmed over them, and the gnats buzzed so constantly that most of the men took no notice.

One of the young men from the Department Clerks Battalion was lying along the railroad embankment, sobbing with his head in his hands. Dennis, walking ahead of the boys' company, stopped when he saw him. The broken man had neither jacket nor rifle, haversack nor bullet pouch. Dennis spat in the soft red dust.

"Get up from there and act like a man!"

The department clerk looked at him out of bloodshot eyes. His skin was a hot, pale red.

"Let me alone! You're not my officer."

"I would n't be an officer of a yellow dog like you. I'd gun-whip you till you stood on your feet. If you don't get up now I'll wrap this pistol barrel around your skull." His left arm, grown agile and strong, jerked out the heavy blue steel revolver, made in the armory on Colt models captured from the Yankees.

Tears crawled through the red-clay dust caked on the man's face. "You don't know what all this is to me," he cried. "I've never slept out of my own bed before. I've never been in any woods before, and I can't stand it. I can't stand it!"

"With men in Lee's army fighting in Pennsylvania for you and your family and your state, you can't even stand the woods to help defend your city while they're gone."

"I don't mind defending the city. But I ain't a soldier. I never volunteered for any marching and fighting like this."

"Fighting?" Dennis stepped over him. He felt the blood heating his warm face. "You have n't even seen a Yankee!"

"I don't want to see any, either!" The man was hysterical. "I volunteered for local defense only. This ain't local—marching through all the woods around Richmond, from the Varina Road out here. And there was fighting near us, too. I wish I'd never heard of any local-defense troops!"

Dennis stooped over him, the pistol balanced. "I'll swear, if you don't get up from there, you'll never hear of them again."

The clerk pushed himself along the ground on his back, away from Dennis. Dennis followed, the gun swung back. The man pushed his hands under him in the dirt and scrambled to his feet. The movement jerked open his unbuttoned blouse. Red welts of chigger and mosquito bites blotched his skin. He backed away, his blistered mouth working.

Dennis's boys' company marched up in good order. Their sixteen-year-old lieutenant ordered them to halt. He stopped up and saluted Dennis. "Captain," he said, "how about sticking him in the ass with a bayonet?"

The department clerk whirled and climbed over the embank-

ment. He went stumbling toward Richmond. Captain Leatherbury looked at Lieutenant McClure. They grinned with their swollen faces.

"March the company in, lieutenant," Dennis said.

He stuffed the heavy gun back into the holster and pulled out a yellow, damp handkerchief. He wiped his face as his boys' company filed past him in route step, swinging their new muskets easily in their hands. He looked them over proudly. Not a one had discarded even a blanket. Except for the dust and sweat, they looked ready for a parade. His heart swelled for "Leatherbury's kids." His own affection was transmitted back from every burning, grinning face. He knew they were as proud of their captain as he was of them.

Then his proud affection choked up in him. This was all that was left him, the only place where he had any more importance. He lowered his head as the guide sergeant swung past. The guide sergeant did not look at his captain. He was Sheppard Kirby, the fourteen-year-old cousin of Brose Kirby. Shep Kirby was a nice, quiet boy, well-mannered, and the fellows liked him. He was obedient and disciplined, a good little soldier, tireless and courageous, and he handled his rifle like a sharpshooter. It was not his fault that he reminded Dennis of that other Kirby, dark and reckless, walking the secret night streets with Mildred.

"Hey, captain! You tired?"

Dennis painfully opened his burning, swollen lids. The lieutenant commanding the first company of the Tredegar Battalion was grinning at him. Behind him the column strung out, the men drooping and sullen, their rifles carried any way. Dennis forced a stiff smile.

"No," he said. "I was waiting to see when you fellows would come up. I knew there were n't any Yankees back there or you'd have been here sooner."

"Hah! I hope you remember who held the first line last week when we were reserves at Bottom's Bridge, and please notice not a man has deserted."

Dennis fell in beside him. "Yes, the men from the Tredegar — and the armory and arsenal, too — have held up remarkably well. I wish I could say as much for the Department Clerks Battalion."

"Oh, they were n't so bad." The reserve officer was a stocky man in his forties, clean-shaven, now with a sandy stubble that glistened in the sun and brightened the good humor in his eyes. "Sedentary fellows, mostly puny. They're unused to anything like this. The old men's company was hard hit, though. Hardly half of them mustered in this morning, and lots of them hired buggies and wagons and anything to get back to Richmond in."

"I noticed the poor old fellows. They looked pretty sick."

"Lots of dysentery in the whole local defense. Even my men were hit."

"They'll get used to it in a few more marches."

"Hell, captain, we can't be marching out like this or there won't be any guns made for the Confederacy."

"I notice your men look ill-humored," Dennis said quietly.

"Why not? They take their work seriously. They know the army depends on them. The arsenal and armory men feel the same way."

"Well, this only happened because the whole army was North. Of course, the Yanks would take this opportunity to practise their war on civilians."

"Have you heard any news from Pennsylvania?" the lieutenant asked quickly.

"Just that Lee was up to Hagerstown and ready to fall on Harrisburg."

"If he has by now, maybe we won't be needing any more cannon, captain."

"I don't think we will. The Yanks will quit."

"God Almighty," the Tredegar lieutenant cried, his eyes bright. "I'll surely know how to enjoy life after this two years. I think I'll go into politics first and pass a law forbidding the mention of the word 'Yankee.' What'll you do, Captain Leatherbury?"

What would he do? Go back to his shuttered plantation house

and the neglected land, worked by unoverseered slaves. He could see it, stark and bare, through the film of his old dream of sitting under the chestnut trees on the flat, circular lawn, the friendly yellow bricks of the house cooling in the dusk, and Mildred framed in the white doorway. In that dream he had seen it always in the summer, when the mimosa trees bloomed and the hills rolling toward the south were hazy green, and Mildred, with her sun-gold hair, was dressed in white. Now the dream was gone. He would go back, alone, without a right arm, and breed hunters for others to ride. He said with sudden intensity:—

“I don’t care what I do, as long as we get those bastards out of Virginia and show them they can’t tell us what to do with our slaves or anything else.”

The man beside him looked away. They walked into the sparsely settled street on the edge of the city. The shades in the houses were drawn against the July afternoon sun. There was no sign of life.

“Well,” the lieutenant said, “I’d better spruce my company up to make them look more like conquering heroes returning. There might be a celebration waiting for us if they’ve gotten news from Lee.”

Dennis hurried on ahead after his boys’ company. He saw the tail of the column turning into Leigh Street. He caught up with them and a sudden tenderness filled him as he saw that his young lieutenant had the tired boys marching in rhythmic step, their rifles on their shoulders. But there was no one to watch. The gray brick houses, with the small, square, two-columned porches, looked deserted. In the back, the gardens looked tired and drooping in the heat, and even the pillared porticoes were empty. Dennis stepped to the head of the column and walked with chin up, his arm swinging. This might be the last war march of the young company, and all the boys felt it.

They swung into Ninth Street. A few civilians, those well-dressed strangers, who might be speculators, spies, or agents, talked in front of the Broad Street Hotel; more lounged on the wide

verandah of Swan Tavern, and more on the sprawling porch of the St. Clair Hotel. If Lee won, Dennis thought, we'll soon clear the city of these vermin. Then he sang out, "Column left." The lanky corporal pivoted like a veteran, the first squad fanned around and picked up their fine step through the gates by the old bell tower.

Dennis saw the men of the First Invalid Battalion standing around on the grass, uniformed and armed. Expanding with pride in his boys, he wanted to show the maimed veterans how his company behaved.

"Squad right!" he bellowed, loud enough for a regiment. "Compon-yay—halt! Right—dress!" The two thin lines pointed like arrows. Dennis looked them over. V.M.I. could n't drill more beautifully than that. He held his lips against a smile. "Front!" Their heads snapped forward and their left hands smacked the gray trousers.

He turned the company over to the first sergeant for dismissal and walked toward the Invalid Battalion. Not one of them spoke, or moved. There was not a sign of admiration or even interest on a single face. There was n't anything. They stood like wooden men. Dennis flushed and looked the line over quickly for a friend. Major Baylor Warwick, leaning heavily on his good leg, with the stick protruding from his left trouser in the grass, stared at him with sombre eyes. His thinned face was taut. Dennis started toward him, hurt and baffled. Baylor had always been cheerful after losing his leg; his spirit had helped Dennis. Why should his friend be allied against him this way, in this hostile group?

"What's the matter, Baylor?"

"Have n't you heard the news?" The voice was dead.

The heat of embarrassment seemed to freeze within him. Chill water ran through his veins. His mouth was suddenly nothing but red-clay dust. He shook his head.

"Lee has been defeated, at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He's falling back."

Dennis felt the same shock as when the minnie ball had struck

him below the shoulder and the same surge of animal instinct to live.

"No! It can't be! Where'd you get the news?"

"A Northern newspaper just came."

"Oh." Dennis heard a hollow voice laughing. "They always lie."

"They lie about victories and losses, but they said he's falling back." Baylor's tone never varied; his face never moved. "They would n't say that with him in Pennsylvania. Those papers have been full of alarms ever since the army went there."

"It must be a strategic retreat. He could n't be defeated!"

"The War Office does n't deny it," the dead voice droned.

Dennis felt the chill creeping all through him again. That rush of blind instinct had receded. "What do they say?"

"Nothing."

"How were the losses?"

"Terrible, the papers say. Mostly in Pickett's Virginia Division."

"Maybe they're lying."

"He's falling back to Virginia."

"Falling back to Virginia? Good God, then the invasion has failed!"

"And what will they find when they get here? There aren't enough provisions left in the state for the women."

"Provisions . . . it's the invasion! The invasion has failed . . . what will it mean to us?"

Baylor Warwick did n't answer. Dennis looked beyond him, at the other men of the Invalid Battalion. They too stood silently. Dennis knew there was nothing to say.

"General Lee, do full justice to this division for its work today." — *Brigadier General Kemper, as he lay wounded, after the Confederate charge at Gettysburg had failed, July 3, 1863*

Always secretly he had feared this would happen to Charles. For thirty years, since first he had turned to his younger brother,

this fear had lain hidden beneath his thoughts. Charles had been twenty-one then, and had just passed his pharmacy examination. Virginius had been nearly thirty, and had just buried his wife. All day, since the funeral, he had sat alone in the empty house.

His way of life, within his family, had been lost when he married Jenny. Friends of his youth knew him no more. Jenny's family had distrusted him from the first; at the end they hated him. That day at dusk Charles had come, shy and quiet, standing in the door of the old house on Church Hill, looking at Virginius with grave eyes.

During those baffled, lonely months that followed, and then the aimless years, Charles had always been there, quiet and grave. But for him there could never have been born the hope and then the strength to begin a new life. But for him the courage would have faltered long before he completed his law reading. For he had had nothing else to sustain him, except the fruitless desire to look in the face the men who had scorned him, somehow to justify those years of passion which men of the world regarded as wasted. Long after he had established himself in law, and married a Sheppard of Albemarle County, and bought the fine stone house on East Clay Street, Charles had been there, unchanged from the twenty-one-year-old pharmacist who had walked into the dusky room and said without speaking: *I am a rock of strength; depend on me. . . .*

Now the rock had broken. When he had seen Elizabeth's face across his desk in the War Office where he filed in the reported losses of brigades at Gettysburg, Virginius had known what she was going to say. And he had known he had always feared it.

He hurried faster over the crest of Main Street hill, and he panted in the July heat. His collar was a damp rag about his neck and his shirt was plastered to him like a poultice. Words and sentences leaped and danced in his brain, half-formed ideas caromed off sentimental phrases. Remembered bombast of the

courtroom balanced against long-forgotten childhood scenes. His brows dripped with the effort to summon up logic; his throat contracted with memories that turned back the years of his living. Impotent and sweating and terrified, Virginius stumbled into the door of the drugstore which for so long had been his sanctuary and which for so long he had taken lightly.

Charles stooped over cardboard packing boxes in the middle of the floor. His coat was off and the sateen back of his waistcoat gleamed dully in the shadowy store. His frayed, starched cuffs were streaked with dust. Without ceasing to pack, or turning, his voice came, muffled and toneless: "Not selling anything to-day. The store is closed. Go to the speculators."

Virginius stood there, frozen. Then through all the fear broke his sorrow for this kind man whom he had forgotten he loved, for his brother who was now fifty-one.

"Charles," he croaked. His voice had no body. "Charles!" He moved across the unswept floor as the stooping man drew up and turned.

The face was a stranger's. Virginius had expected that twenty-one-year-old pharmacist, with smooth cheeks and grave eyes. This man's unshaven face was grizzled and ruttled gray, with deep sockets lit with a feverish glow. Even his lips were gray, trembling back over yellowed teeth.

"I can't help you to-day, Brother," he said in that same toneless, muffled monotone. "I'm busy."

Virginius felt tears burning around his sweat-wet lids. "Charles, I—I'm here to help you. Judy sent Elizabeth. You can't do this thing. Think of your family."

"I am thinking of my family. I'm thinking of my two sons who were at Gettysburg. I want to be with them."

"Charles, Gettysburg has been a horror to everybody, but you can't carry on like this. Brose has been through worse than that and—"

"No! He's never been through anything like that. Look at this." He fumbled in a pocket of his waistcoat.

"I know, Charles, I've seen the reports."

"You have n't seen this!" He pulled a crumbled yellow piece of paper out of his pocket. His hands were shaking. "Read *that* report."

From the look in his brother's eyes, Virginius knew it would be wiser to pretend to read, and not to argue. Sentences in Brose's rough scrawl stood out from the page. "During the morning we lay in some brush behind a knoll. It was very hot. . . . Two hundred cannons were firing over our heads. . . . When we advanced down the road, we were in full view. . . . All the Yank cannons turned on us and . . . our men fell like flies. . . . When we turned up the hill, we dressed the line. . . . The men looked like they were on parade. . . . I think our division was all alone when we walked up the hill. . . . When we got to the stone wall on top the hill, I did n't have a dozen men left in my company. . . . We were among the guns. . . . General Armistead fell there. . . . No supports and . . . falling back under heavy fire I brought out only a squad. . . . All that was left of our company . . . only thirty-three men left in the First Virginia. . . . General Garnett was also killed, and General Kemper, our brigadier, badly wounded. . . . If we'd had supports . . ." Virginius glanced at his brother from under his brows.

Charles saw him. "Ah, you saw, did n't you? Only thirty-three men left of the seven companies in Brose's regiment."

"Yes, Charles, but a lot are wounded." He forcibly quieted his voice, and tried persuasion. "There're twenty-five miles of wagons of the wounded. Many died on the way for lack of medicals. That's where you can help. You have a knack with those drug substitutes of yours."

"I can't help enough that way. The speculators rob me. They rob everybody. I can't keep my drugstore going."

"Give up your drugstore then, and devote all your time to substitute drugs. Sell them direct to the medical purveyors. I'll see that they buy from you. You can earn more than in your drugstore and everything you do will be for the army."

"There won't be any army without more men."

"Charles, we've got men enough." His voice was calm now. He spoke very gently. "There won't be any more invasions. From now on, we just hold them off. No one can defeat Lee. Even after Gettysburg, Meade was afraid to attack him. We'll just fight them until they're sick of fighting. But we're going to be all alone. Vicksburg has fallen and our last hope of European recognition is gone. Now is the time for every man to do what he can do best, to keep our country alive."

"You've told me yourself the army needed more men."

"We're going to get more, too." He laid a steady hand on Charles's gaunt shoulder. "We'll get men who can do nothing else. But you, working on drugs, are worth ten men in the field. In fact, I can swear to you that by working on your drugs you can keep ten men in the field; whereas, if you go yourself, we will lose ten."

Charles straightened. The fevered glow faded in his eyes, like an ember burning out. "You can swear that to me?" he said slowly.

Virginius thrust out his hand. "I swear it."

Charles took the hand, limply. His eyes stared beyond Virginius. "I still would rather fight."

"All right, you can fight in the local-defense troops. They do need men. That would n't interfere with your drugs—"

"That's true, I can join the Locals. I'll do it as soon as I sell my store."

"Don't sell your store in a hurry. Get it in order and have an auction. In that way, you can more than clear your debts; you can make a little. Don't let these speculators get your stuff."

"Oh, but I'm so tired of things the way they are. I want to do something, like my sons are doing."

"We're all tired of things, Charles, but now we have to think of Virginia. You can join the Locals right away, to-day, and still take your time readying your store for a public auction."

"Yes." He nodded. He was silent for a long time. Virginius felt constricted breath easing through his throat. He was as wet

as if he had been in the rain. He was so weak he wanted to lie down. Then Charles said: "Did you read where Brose said they would've won if they'd been supported? He was inside the Yankee breastworks himself."

He looked up, and his eyes shone.

"If only we'd had Jackson!" — *The people of the Confederacy*

August had never been hotter. The trees in Capitol Square were wilted and the grass was as dry and gray as a rag. The line of soldiers, at ease in the shade below the Capitol steps, were black with sweat. The trim officers on the broad white steps, checking over sheets of buff Confederate paper, kept stopping to wipe their faces. Between them and the soldiers, older men fanned themselves with their hats, and ladies tilted parasols against the smothering sun.

"Ain't like when we was heah befoh, at the 'auguration," Mrs. Fitchett said. She pressed quickly through the brightly dressed young ladies, leaning to one side with her heavy basket.

"No, 'n' I don't like it," Mary Mattox grumbled, "comin' heah with all these kind of people. Why don't you wait till them officers git through with the soljuhs, then we can git at Joe by hisself?"

"Mought n't git at him then, Mary." She shook her head stubbornly, flopping the overhanging brim of her calico bonnet. "Papers say they're goin' to march all the exchanged prisoners right to Camp Lee, foh to send 'em back to theah regiments."

"How do you know what the papers say?" Mary Mattox was hanging back.

"Nevuh mind," Mrs. Fitchett answered sharply. "I find out things where my Joe's concerned."

"Humph, been better foh you if you had n't found out where to

sell yoh weddin' ring. Ain't no sense in gittin' all these vittels foh Joe when yoh own belly's flat as a chipmunk's."

Mrs. Fitchett stopped and craned her head around. Courage stiffened her when Joe was near. "Ain't no call to throw it up to me, Mary, that I ain't payin' foh sharin' yoh room. You know I allus share what vittels I git with you."

"Theah you go," Mary said sullenly, "so techy about that Joe you think I'm throwin' something up to you. It's yohself I'm thinkin' of. You can't git enough sewin' to put food in yoh own mouth, 'n' you go sell yoh ring from yoh poor dead husband foh to buy fancy vittels foh that boy. You better think moh of yohself, that's what I'm sayin'."

"I ain't got no self no moh. None of us ain't got nothing since these Yankees been after us. Joe's starvin' and half nekkid tryin' to fit them Yankees off us and he's the onliest one to think of now. I'm so glad he was n't one of them killed at Gettysburg I'd sell anything I got — myself if ary man wanted me — to git him something nice to eat befoh he has to go back. So theah. Don't you say no moh about what I do foh Joe." She jerked her head around and pushed on through the crowd.

"I did n't mean no harm." Mary sounded subdued, but Mrs. Fitchett was moving on through the opening.

There stood the line of drooping men. She trembled with eagerness. She heard Mary say, "Great Gawd, did you ever see such ragamuffins?" But the words had no meaning. Her eyes ran over the whole line. She was so excited the tears had come, and she could hardly see. She pushed closer and stared at each bearded, haggard man, at the hair tumbling beneath their floppy hats, at the hair covering their matted faces, at the patched and ragged shirts, at the patched and ragged pants, at the soleless, broken shoes. No two were dressed alike, yet about them all there was a likeness. In their eyes she saw it, bright and fierce and haunted — something that had not been in the eyes of Richmond men before the war. She had seen it in Joe's when he was wounded.

"And these are the men who stormed the breastworks at

Cemetery Ridge?" Beside her an old gentlemen in a fawn-colored beaver spoke to a gray-haired scarecrow who showed jagged teeth in a shy grin.

"Yes suh, we got theah, but the Yanks jest swarmed over us same like a dust cloud. We was sure sorry to be took prisoners, but theah was n't no other way out. I surrendered to—must've been twenty Yanks."

The fine ladies stared at the men with admiration and awe in their eyes. Mrs. Fitchett felt her thin bosom swell. She stood straighter. Joe was one of these men. *They stormed the breast-works of Cemetery Ridge. . . .*

She moved down the line. As she peered into the weather-blackened face of each exchanged prisoner, the words of the ladies and children and old gentlemen ran through her like a fine song.

"We could' held 'em if we 'd a been supported."

"Do you think our cause is lost now?"

"We 'd 've never lost this battle with Old Jack."

"But Vicksburg has fallen."

"We can beat that army anytime, anywhere."

"No hope of European recognition now."

"Wait 'll we git a crack at 'em in Vuhginny."

"If only we 'd had Jackson!"

Then she was at the last man in the line. He was just a boy, with fuzz on his cheeks, and he was talking to a lady. It must be his mother, too, the way he talked to her.

"Yes'm," he was saying, "about a dozen of Company D escaped. They retreated back down the hill under First Sergeant Kirby. I saw them disappear in the smoke. I don't know if they made it."

"Only eight did, son," the lady said. "Oh, I'm so grateful you were captured!"

"'Scuse me, ma'am," Mrs. Fitchett said, "but I heard yoh boy say he was in Company D. My boy was captured, too, in tha' company. Do you know where he is—Joe Fitchett?"

The boy looked at her a moment. Then he said slowly: "No 'm, I don't."

"Did n't he come back with you?"

"Well, I don't know who all the prisoners are who were exchanged with me."

"I know he come with you-all."

The boy did n't say anything. Mrs. Fitchett moved around behind him. No soldiers were there. Suddenly anxious, she moved back down the line, faster, the basket of food bobbing. She stared into every face. Joe just was n't there. She turned in bewilderment to Mary. Fright began to tighten her as it had when he used to come home late.

Mary said soothingly: "Heah comes the officers. When they git through maybe we'll find out where he is. Maybe he did n't come back with these."

"I know he was comin' on that Flag of Truce boat."

She saw that the civilians had moved away from the soldiers, and an officer stepped up with the roll. Without thinking, Mrs. Fitchett scurried across the grass. All at once she was out there alone, and the officer was looking at her in surprise, out of deep gray eyes that were very sad.

"'Scuse me, sir," she said, "but I'm lookin' for my boy, Joe Fitchett of Company D. He was one of those men that stormed the breastworks at Cemetery Ridge. Ain't he comin' back to-day?"

The officer had thin cheeks, as if he needed a good meal himself. His gray moustache hung over his mouth. He looked at her a moment, then down at the paper in his hand.

"Fitchett," he murmured. "Company D." He ran his finger down the list and stopped. He stood there, staring at the sheet.

"Don't you find him?"

The officer looked up out of eyes that seemed even sadder. "Yes, Mrs. Fitchett, I found him. I reckon your boy's not coming back — at all."

All life in her body stopped. She did n't see the officer any more. She did n't see anything. Then she heard a voice that kept saying something, on and on, and she tried to listen. "Do you need someone to help you home, ma'am?"

Then she saw the officer again and he was bending over her and asking her that question. She looked all around. Everyone was staring at her. There was Mary, beckoning. Mrs. Fitchett turned and walked toward Mary. She had no sensation of walking, but Mary grew nearer. Then Mary had her by the arm, shaking her.

"What 'd you want to go 'n' make a show out 'n yourself like that foh?"

Mrs. Fitchett looked up at her, full of wonder for what Mary was saying. All at once Mary stopped shaking her. She stepped back and her face worked in the funniest way. "Martha!" she cried. "Martha! Ain't he comin' back?"

She understood Mary then. She shook her head.

"Allister, D. . . . Present . . . Bowles, J. . . . Present . . . Carter, G. . . . Present . . . Dougherty, J. . . . Present . . . Ewen, H. . . . Present . . . Gresham, B. . . . Present . . ."

The officer's voice droned on. The men sang out. *Fitchett, J.* At the Fair Grounds Camp the officer had called out his name like that. At the Fair Grounds Camp he had worn a gray frock coat with double rows of shiny buttons; and on parade white belts crossed his chest and a big brass buckle with D on it had gleamed in the May sun. *Present. . . .* His young voice rang through her, as it had when she had watched him, standing so stiff and straight.

She turned around and there were all the soldiers breaking out of line and all the people rushing up to them. She looked at Mary.

"Let 's go home, Martha," Mary said.

Mrs. Fitchett nodded. She walked across the dead grass, leaning to one side with the heavy basket of food.

CHAPTER XXI

"Not a living thing . . . no horse or cow, no hog or sheep, no dog or cat . . . remained. . . . Drills, however, and ploughs of the most valuable kinds had been piled together in the yard by Yankees and burned; wagons, carts and an elegant carriage had been cut to pieces. . . ." — *General W. N. Pendleton on returning with the Confederate Army into Prince George County, Virginia*

Could this be the end for the women of her family — sorting old dresses and old memories? They sat in a triangle and none glanced her way when Mildred moved into the doorway of the upstairs living room. Nearest the black marble fireplace sat Aunt Abbie, bent forward toward the smouldering wood embers so that her shoulder blades poked peaks in her worn black voile. The reflected glow on her gold-rimmed spectacles gave to her peering eyes a lifeless stare. Beside her on the floor lay dresses from which she had cut the lace, to be remade into collars and cuffs and offered for sale.

There were clouds of Valenciennes lace that had flounced and trimmed the white satins; there was the guipure lace from the bayadere silk gown. Mrs. Wade had worn it to the President's first tea. *I could see the enmity between Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Joe Johnston then. . . .* There was the gold-embroidered green silk of the fall before the war, and the blue and silver brocade evening gown Mrs. Wade had worn to the spring ball at which she met General Beauregard. *He was a handsome man and a great hero then. . . . It is a shame the way Mr. Davis makes so many enemies. . . .*

Cousin Flora's bulk bulged over the arms of the narrow wing chair. The floor around her was cluttered with odds and ends she hoped to salvage for sale: shaded roses from the tulle gown Mrs. Wade had worn to the governor's inaugural reception, garniture of green leaves and gold grapes, blue and silver feathers, fur from an opera cloak, purple velvet from a coal-scuttle bonnet. *Maybe the President would buy this purple velvet against the day when he'll be Emperor. . . .*

It was her mother whom Mildred watched most intently. The calm that had been growing since the two older women had come to live in the house settled now on Mrs. Wade. She dug into an old trunk, fingering the garments as though the memories they evoked belonged to a far-away past. She held up pieces of flannel that had been used under tablecloths. *We could line pieces of carpet with strips of this and make shoes for Constance's children. . . .* Her voice was an old lady's, like her manner. Gone was the morbid determination which had sustained her before the death of Dinwiddie Wade, and gone was the rigidity that followed. With her face thinned and shallow bowls in her cheeks, imperceptible lines drew her features into a pattern of resignation that gave her a pathetic and unnatural look of age. For she had acquired the acceptance of her older kinswomen, but not their maturity. Child-like and helpless, she had come to depend upon them.

Mildred had watched it happening, listening to their common-places: of five dollars paid for a shinbone from which they made two meals of soup, of substitutes for butter now that it sold for fifteen dollars a pound; of what to do for wood this fall with a cord selling for forty dollars. Day by day Mildred had watched and waited for the moment in her mother's resignation when Brose could be introduced. She had waited during the hot weeks of July and August when the details of the invasion had trickled through the long hours, and the paroled prisoners with their bleak eyes had filed into Richmond. She had waited during the early weeks of September when the city prepared for another winter of siege, with food scarcer and prices higher, with the ranks of their armies

thinner and the whispering voices of defeat stronger. There were no more men to fill the gaps, they cried, and the starving and the frightened wailed that the swelling Yankee army would sweep like a wave over Virginia and swallow up even the landmarks of their dead.

She had waited with her secret. To speak his name, to share in words the thought of him, had been a driving urge. The love was heavy inside her, coursing its sensuous life through her veins, flooding her hours with an almost unbearable ecstasy. It colored the stinking, bloodstained hospital, the old and resigned atmosphere of her home, the strange complexity of the city: hungry and wounded and tattered, drunken and golden and greedy, new brocades and old mourning, gold *galons* and dusty rags, *I wish I was in Dixie*, and *Just before the battle, Mother*. It touched every street and every man and woman, until all life was a reflection of her own flowering. It ached to be shared, and she had waited until now.

Now he was downstairs in a new uniform with the bright bar of a lieutenant on his collar and a single gold braid on his sleeve. The city had donated the uniforms to the re-forming remnants of the Bloody First. The buttons shone bright with the seal of Virginia embossed on them, but brightest of all was his sword. Now was the moment and she must speak gently, so as not to startle her mother.

"Mother," she said quietly, "would you like to make me very happy?"

All three looked up and her mother smiled as though nothing could touch her now. "Of course, Mildred, what is it?"

"Lieutenant Kirby is downstairs. Would you meet him?"

Her mother's smile vanished and fright pinched her face. She clutched at the piece of flannel. "Why . . . why . . ." her bloodless lips trembled . . . "you have no right to ask that of me . . ."

"I have n't the right to ask you to receive a guest in your home?"

"He's not a guest. Never! Just because I agreed to let you meet him here, to avoid scandal, because you would meet him no

matter what . . . that does n't mean that I've got to accept him . . ." she turned in appeal to Aunt Abbie and Cousin Flora . . . "does it?"

"I don't know, Isobel." Cousin Flora spoke matter-of-factly, glancing from Mrs. Wade to her. "Mildred loves him, anybody can see that, and Baylor Warwick spoke most highly of him. Besides, Agnes Chilton accepted him and —"

"There is too much of this talk of accepting." Aunt Abbie's voice quavered and her blue-veined hands shook as she nervously laid aside the silk dress. "From the way you-all go on, anyone would think this being in the Confederacy has made Virginia different from what it ever was. If you ask me, it was the blackest day in the state's history when we ever seceded from the Union, and we'd all better pray for peace instead of taking the soldiers into our homes and making heroes of them." She was trembling all over when she finished.

"We do pray for peace, Aunt Abbie." Mildred spoke as quietly as she could. "Peace to be free, to be let alone. It's not any change in Virginia that Mother's thinking of. It's personal with Lieutenant Kirby, is n't it?"

"Yes, yes, it's personal." Her voice broke, screeching high. "It's because of your dead father, and if you had any respect for his memory . . ." She choked off and began to cry.

"See what you've done to your mother." Aunt Abbie pulled herself out of her chair. "You always were a difficult child, I must say . . ."

"We're all difficult people, Mamma," Cousin Flora said bluntly. She was impatient when she glanced toward Mrs. Wade. "There never was a Wade who did n't know exactly what he wanted, and the only difference with Mildred is that the war has given her wants a little hard for you to understand." She was talking straight to Mrs. Wade, her dry voice rolling over Aunt Abbie's soothing murmurs. "From the look I've had of the young man, I'd say he would be a better match for Mildred than most of the beaux I've seen around here."

"Oh, you don't know anything about it!" Mrs. Wade brushed

aside the old lady and screamed at Cousin Flora. "He worked for Dinny. He was his *clerk*. Dinny ought to know about him and he did know, and he said he would ruin Mildred's life and he made her give him a promise . . ."

"All right, Mother." Mildred cut in coldly when her mother paused to gasp in a breath. She felt herself trembling inside as Aunt Abbie was all over. "I'll never ask you again." She turned around and opened the door.

"I hope you won't!" The hysterical voice was flung at her back. "I never want to hear his name again. I wish—I wish he'd get killed!"

Mildred was jerked to a halt as if by an invisible hand. She felt her fingers squeezing the doorknob. In the room she heard Aunt Abbie gasp. Then, behind her, there was only silence. She must n't turn back in there, she must n't. Slowly she forced her feet forward, over the threshold, and her cold hand moved the door to behind her. She must n't stop to think. She walked on, stiff-legged, down the hall and down the staircase.

She should have known. Nothing of their love could be shared in this house, or anywhere. Since that June day at high noon on the breastworks, she had felt her difference from her friends and the other nurses. She had been constantly aware of the dark passion flowering within her and she carried the consciousness of her fulfilled womanhood like a crown. That's the way it would have to be forever, the secret unshared, her pride unshared, their life lived only within their love. It was enough.

Brose was standing by the front window when she entered the parlor. The fading afternoon light illumined his face and revealed an expression she had never seen before. Mildred had the impression it had never been there before. Even now, so faint it was, she would have missed it except for the light. It was as though he lived at a new depth of feeling of which he was unaware. It was gone as he moved from the window toward her, but her impression remained and stirred in response her own feelings.

"Your mother would n't see me," he said simply.

She shook her head and her hands took hold of his forearms as if trying to communicate her sense of their aloneness and their oneness. His face was expressionless, as she remembered it most.

"I never thought she would, but I'm sorry for you."

"Don't be sorry for me." Her fingers tightened on the solidness under his flesh. "We've always been alone and we can be now. We don't need anyone else."

"I'm glad you think so." He seemed to scrutinize her, and then he grinned. "We're like the Confederacy now. We won't have anybody else."

"And like the Confederacy, we'll win anyway."

He nodded slightly, the smile leaving his lips. There came again that fleeting, curious expression and he seemed to be brooding over something he was trying to understand. This time she was baffled.

"Brose! We will win, won't we?"

"We've got to," he said. "But I wish Longstreet had n't taken those two divisions to Chickamauga. After all, Bragg did nothing with the victory."

"Don't be thinking of the army now, darling."

"I can't help it, because I know that if General Lee had those two divisions, he could've driven Meade out of Virginia by now."

Behind that curious expression he was removed from her. His thoughts took him now to distant dusty roads where his eyes strained through hot rolling smoke. Instinctively her hands shook him.

"But you're near here at Taylorsville now," she cried, "and I'm glad, because I can see you all the time."

He looked down into her eyes, but the expression did not lift. "I can never see you all the time until we get the Yankees out of Virginia." The hardness in his voice was subdued, grim instead of reckless. "And we could invade them again now, if the men had enough shoes."

"Another Gettysburg, you mean!" She was frightened now.

"I could n't stand another one, Brose. Everybody says that was a death trap and —"

"That was n't the Old Man's fault," he said quickly. "Everything went wrong there. We should've won on the first two days and had an even chance on the third. I know, I don't care what they say, because I went up that hill and was inside the breastworks, but we did n't get any more support than — than nothing. The army was n't working together then, that's all. They had n't gotten used to not having Jackson. . . . Oh hell, there's just been too much talk about it from these people in the offices." The brooding was lifted then and there was the old fierceness, drawn fine, hard and unyielding as a blade.

"You love General Lee, don't you?"

"Every man in the army does. If Davis would quit trying to run everything and make the Old Man commander in chief, we'd have won by now."

She stared up at him as her fear grew, blown up by a new thought.

"Brose, are you fighting for the Confederacy — or for General Lee?"

"I'm fighting to get these Yankees out of Virginia."

"But is it for peace? Do you want peace as much as I do?"

Heat glared in the black depths of his eyes. He tore his arms loose from her hands and grasped her to him. The strength was wrenched from her body. He held her from him, helpless in the grip of his violence.

"I want to be with you more than I ever wanted anything in my life. That's why I hate those people so much. That's why I like to kill them. I'd like to kill every damned person in the United States to get to you."

His voice toughened then, like his grip, shaking into life the memory of his loving her. The old desire, starting from the edges and the hidden parts of her soul, trampled through her body, possessing and weakening like a fever.

"Oh, Brose . . . I ought to hate you when you hold me like this. I ought to be ashamed. . . ."

He drew her to him, hurting her, the brass buttons bruising the flesh at her breast. "I reckon we both ought to be ashamed of a lot of things."

"I don't feel ashamed, though. I don't feel like a bad woman. Do you think I am, darling?"

"I think . . . I think . . . I don't know what to think about you. You've gotten inside me, like a devil. I see your eyes, all smoky, wherever I go. I think of how beautiful you are and how I love you and how I'm going to act different, and then I look at your mouth, your God-damned sweet mouth, the reddest mouth in the world, and it looks all open like you're ready to be kissed . . ."

She could stand no more. The pain of her desire knew no words. She could only lift up her face, offer her lips. When she felt his mouth take them, a shudder passed through her. Her eyes closed and she was weak, and she could only cling to him when he lifted her.

Only the powdery glow of dusk seeped between the damask curtains. Only shadows were in the room. The only sound was the rumble of a distant gun caisson over flagstones.

CHAPTER XXII

1ST COMPANY RICHMOND HOWITZERS
McLAW'S DIV'N, LONGSTREET'S CORPS
November 15, 1863

DEAREST MOTHER —

Here we are about to go into winter camp again, this time on the Rapidan River at Morton's Ford. I know we will never have so fine a winter again as last year at Fredericksburg, but the old soldiers say that you always hate to leave any camp because we have piles of wood cut and we usually have "our tree" and "our spring" and "our fire" and it does seem that nothing else will ever be as cozy.

We are living in our tents now, with chimneys through the top, but as soon as we get supplies we'll begin making our huts. I hope that is soon because it is very cold up here, and I've never seen so much rain. Walter (he's our battery sergeant) says it looks like a hard winter. There is lots of sassafras around here and we make good tea from it. Tell Marie it is not as good as hers though. Also Walter has taught our mess how to make greens from dandelions which we eat with our bacon.

Our guns are advanced about 500 yds from camp right at the river and we do guard duty there, with the Yanks right on the opposite bank. Some of them do not seem to be bad fellows and some of our men trade with them, like tobacco for coffee, but I have nothing to trade. We heard that one of our officers has a friend among the Yanks, a man he roomed with at West Point, and the other night he smuggled him in our lines in a Reb uniform and took him to a dance. That sounds like peace might not be far away, doesn't it? I think a lot of peace, when I am out there alone on guard duty, and how nice it will be when I am at home

again. My favorite pastime is to imagine a whole dinner with everything in it that I like. It will never be any corn pones again, not even Marie's batter bread. Don't think that I am unhappy though, or suffering. We all think first of home and do not want you to worry.

About the things I need, don't send them if it means a sacrifice to you, but these would come in handy:—about 4 pds. of 10 penny nails, a pair of wrought iron hinges for a door, some Soldier's Comfort Smoking tobacco, some bi-carbonate of soda, socks or underwear if you can spare it, and *anything good to eat*.

Other men in my mess will get other things to go toward making our huts. All are cheerful except those poor fellows who don't get clothes from home, and the winter is coming on without them having hats or shoes. The rest of us play outdoors a lot and bandy is our favorite game. As this paper is all used up, and I must leave space for the address after I fold it, I will close now. Give my love to Papa and Granny and Elizabeth and if Brose is still at Taylorsville Camp tell him he is lucky to be so near home. There is a revival of religion in camp now and I read my Testament every night.

Aff'tly,

Your son,

PAUL KIRBY

Now that Chester was to be one of the family they read Paul's letter to him. They entertained him in the sitting room and admitted they wouldn't open the parlor this winter because they could n't heat it with coal at thirty dollars a load. Granny dozed in her chair, rocking in front of the fire. Mrs. Kirby, wrapped in a shawl, went on shredding silk from an old black dress, which she intended to mix with cotton before carding it, and talked as though Chester might be one of her sons or a cousin. She did n't raise her face, with the brows drawn in an almost perpetual frown, and her voice had a sullen heaviness.

"Mr. Kirby started picking those blackberries in July," she was saying. "He had Marie squeeze out the juice and strain it and then he did the rest. He worked with the patience of Job. He measured

sugar to the drop, used his scales for powdered cinnamon and grated nutmeg and cloves. Then he boiled and strained it, and you've never seen such straining. He got it as clear as mountain water. Then he put in the brandy, a half pint to each quart. He had two gallons of that brandy, good blockade brandy, at fifty dollars a gallon. He saved the money by selling candles Elizabeth made. . . ."

Elizabeth was growing tighter and tighter, sitting in the wing chair with her back pressed against it as stiff as a board. Her mother had no right to talk to him as if he were already one of the family. It had hardly been two weeks ago, just before Thanksgiving, that she had written and told him she would marry him; and this was his first visit. They did n't know whether he wanted to be taken into their poverty and poor makeshifts like this. He would n't like it, being talked to just as if he were anybody.

"He's using those thirty-two quarts of blackberry cordial, at ten dollars a quart," her mother went on, "to attract customers to his auction. He expects to sell everything he has in the store to-day before he closes. It's hard on a man of his age to auction off his store after he's had it since he was married. He thinks he can earn as much making these drug substitutes for the army, but I know it's a bitter blow to him, Mr. Cary."

Major Cary! Elizabeth felt as though her nerves were hard bands that had suddenly tightened. Oh, why must her mother go on like this? She had told her mother that he had just been promoted, and there, on his dusty jacket, was the new *galon*, bright against the faded gold of the older braids. What must he be thinking? She could never know any more, with that serious expression that was always fitted on his thin features. It took the youth out of his face and gave him the look of some sort of zealot. His grave gray eyes, fixed on her mother, might be hiding any thoughts. This was the evening she had waited for, every minute for two weeks, and each of those minutes had been longer than any week she had ever lived before. But her mother could think of nothing but Papa, late at the store.

"I'm worried about him; I can't help it, being so late. Maybe he just hates to leave the store. You know, he's been in the pharmacy business since he was seventeen. That's all he ever wanted to do, even as a boy, his father says. His father wanted him to go into politics, but the Kirbys never had much push."

Granny opened her eyes, without another movement, and looked at them as though she had been awake all the time. "Bought one of the original lots of Richmond, Charles's forefather did. That man was born on a farm right near where the armory is now. If he'd a hung onto it, the Kirbys would be rich to-day."

"The Kirbys never were people to take to farming, though," Judy Kirby said. "They were office workers back in London, before they ever came to Virginia. All of them liked some kind of office work—except Brose." She raised her eyes, not to them, but to look into the fire. The drawn brows lifted and her face grew soft, as she used to look often before the war. In those days she had the hard, bitter look only when she was angry.

"Brose ain't a Kirby," Granny droned. "He's a Fitzhugh. They're great ones for the country. They're a wild people, deep and dark."

"You're always saying that, Granny." The nervous words blurted out of Elizabeth.

"Well," the old lady cackled, "I'm always right. Now Paul ain't a Fitzhugh. When you know them like I do, you can always tell a Fitzhugh. Now take my husband's brother, Mordecai. He killed a—"

"Granny!" It seemed like a scream from her twisting nerves. "Chester does n't want to hear all that while he's here on his short furlough. He's going back to-morrow."

Granny looked at her out of sharpened, faded eyes. Almost she seemed to wink. She settled down in her calico wrapper and lowered again her wrinkled lids.

Mrs. Kirby straightened suddenly. She shivered and drew her shawl tighter about her. "It's getting chilly in here and I'm worried about Charles. It's long past time for him to be here."

"Maybe," Elizabeth said nervously, "maybe Chester and I could go down to the store and see what's keeping him."

Her mother looked at them out of strained eyes, and under them the circles were deeply lined and very dark.

"I'd be glad to, Mrs. Kirby," Chester said. He sat up very straight, as if with an effort.

"Maybe it'd be better, then, if you don't mind. I don't reckon it's very cold out and it's only a few squares away."

"No, Mother, it's not cold at all." Elizabeth jumped up. "I'll be right down with my things."

The chill of the halls and her room bit into her bones as she fumbled in the darkness for her cloak and hat. Coming back downstairs, she saw Chester waiting in the hall, just as he had that afternoon when first he told her he loved her. He was muffled in his yellow-lined cape. His rolled-brim hat, pinned up on one side, swung from one hand. Weariness was in every line of his body. There was none of the old eagerness lighting his grave eyes as he turned to her, and it seemed to hurt him to smile.

The chill sank deeper into her and coursed down her spine. Maybe he was sorry he had asked her to marry him, sorry now that he had seen her family as it really was. Outside heavy snow clouds hung close to the earth and the wind was raw. The dark street was deserted. He walked heavily beside her, his spurs occasionally singing, and her fear grew until she had to speak. The shamed words came blundering out.

"Chester, you—you're not mad because—because Mother talked the way she did? Kept talking about Papa and—and the drugstore ..."

He whirled around to face her and his face was entirely different. The serious look was gone and there was only surprise. "Mad, Elizabeth! Mad? How could I be? I was thinking how sad it was that a fine man like your father should have to auction off his store, at his age."

Relief unstrung her completely. "But you looked so—so serious."

"It is serious. Most of the old stores in the city have gone.

Everything is auction and rummage sales. I hate to look at the papers any more. All they have is ads for stores and homes and slaves and personal goods for sale—that, and ads for volunteer companies for local defense only. It's a serious thing when a man like your father has to fight to protect his city."

That was not what she wanted to hear and she said, embarrassed, fumbling: "But you had just come down to see me after—after what you wrote, and I thought that maybe—maybe all that talk might change you somehow—"

His arm pulled her hand close to his side. "Nothing will ever change me, Elizabeth."

Still it was n't right. There was something missing in his words and manner, something that she had waited for to reassure her, something that a betrothed should hear. She sighed.

"Maybe," he said, "you think I act like I don't care, because I do think so much about these things."

"Not that you don't care, but—oh, I don't know. It's the horrible war. That's all anybody seems to think of any more. I thought—I thought that with us we—would talk about other things."

"We'll have to wait for peace to talk of those, Elizabeth."

"But when will that ever be?" She felt like crying.

"That's what I think of so much, since you said you would marry me. It seems further off. Things have gone very badly in the West."

"But everybody is always saying that," she cried tearfully. "How about us, here in Virginia? We never lose."

"No, but we can't win alone. And if the United States divides the Confederacy, it'll go very hard with us. They've already closed the Mississippi to us, and now that Bragg has fallen back into Georgia, they've taken their first step toward cutting us in half."

"But Brose wrote that Bragg had resigned and Joe Johnston was in his place."

"Yes, but the damage is already done! Bragg won a great victory

at Chickamauga when he had Longstreet's help. He could have followed it up and recaptured Chattanooga. But he did n't, and there's been nothing but dissension ever since. The worst of it is, Bragg's chief attacker was Forrest and he was removed because Bragg is Davis's pet. Of course, Johnston is a good general, but he's cautious. The very man we need now is Forrest."

Elizabeth was ashamed to say she did n't understand. She had heard talk of Bragg and Tennessee for months, but she could n't remember geography. She thought Georgia was way south of them, and they all said Bragg had retreated into Georgia from Tennessee.

"Then," Chester went on, "the siege of Charleston is bad, too, and it takes a lot of our men. You see, Elizabeth, our armies are growing smaller all the time and we have to keep shifting them around. The United States armies are growing larger all the time."

She nodded. She understood that all right, but she did n't want to think of it. She wanted to think of them, and the disappointment upset her so she could hardly keep back the tears. They turned into Main Street and up on the corner she saw a dim light from her father's store.

"Why," she said shakily, "it looks like he's closed. He always leaves that low light burning now, because of the ruffians."

Chester walked faster. From the set-back, gray brick houses pools of shadow washed up over the sidewalk. Through the bared trees the bleak wind sighed. No one else walked the street. Down toward the river sparks climbed swiftly toward the clouds hanging low over the Tredegar Iron Works. Elizabeth felt her breath coming fast and short. There was something sickly about that light.

They reached the store and the doors seemed closed. She looked through the glass doors. The low light flickered on the cavernous shelves, which used to be crowded with such marvelous things when she was a little girl. Chester stepped up to the doors. One swung inward at his touch. It was ghostly the way it moved back, and a

chill passed through her. Chester turned to her. His set face was very white. His gray, grave eyes seemed to be trying to tell her something.

"Wh-what is it?" She could hardly get her breath.

"In there," he said. "On the floor — your father."

She felt the old emptiness, and her legs started to tremble. He put his arm around her.

"We must go in," he said.

"I'm afraid."

He pulled her closer, partly behind him, shielding her face with his shoulder. His cape smelled dusty. He moved sidewise through the door, drawing her after him. She could hardly stand, her legs shook so, and she clung to him. He gently moved away from her hands.

"You must steady yourself," he said.

Her eyes followed him as he stooped. His long shadow fell across the still figure on the floor. It was all bent and twisted and she saw the edge of her father's face against the floor. A dark stream trickled away from his face. Then she started to cry and the sobs tore her body and she could n't get her breath. Chester had lifted her father's head. The eyes were closed and there was a dark splotch over his forehead. The blood was trickling out of that. Chester looked up.

"You know where the water is?"

She nodded.

"Fill a cup or something and wet your handkerchief. Go on now, Elizabeth." His set face was stern in the dim light. "Your father's alive. We've got to help him."

She moved unsteadily into the little room. Faint night light blocked out the window. Her trembling fingers touched the tap and turned it. She found a bowl on the shelf above and then wet her handkerchief. She stumbled back. Chester was holding her father's head on his knee. He took the handkerchief and bathed the face. She had never seen anyone so white. Her father looked like an old man. His lips were gray and hung slack. Chester

poured a few drops of water through them. Mr. Kirby groaned and she started to cry again.

"Stop it, Elizabeth."

"I can't help it. I was so selfish at home not wanting Mother to talk about him and he was lying here all the time like this . . . oh . . ."

"*Shut up.*" The sharp voice froze the words in her throat.

Her father shook his head and his eyes fluttered open. They looked straight into hers, sick and old and pained. He muttered something.

"Take this, sir," Chester said, and held the bowl. The water splashed over her father's lips and she saw him swallow. He moaned again, then his eyes focused on Chester.

"How — long —"

"We just came. It's about ten o'clock."

Chester dipped the handkerchief in the bowl and rubbed it over Mr. Kirby's face, squeezing the cold water on the wound.

"About an hour ago," her father said. His voice was thin and strangled. "Three men. I was just closing up. One of them had something in his hand. I — tried to fight for my money. . . . They took everything. One of them hit me finally with something . . ."

"Don't talk now, Mr. Kirby. We must get you home. Have you any brandy here?"

He shook his head. "Sold everything. Fine day. . . . Now they have it all. My debts — I can't pay them now — and there's no money. . . . Oh, my God, what'll we do?"

"Please don't talk, sir. See if you can get up with my help."

Chester put one arm around his back, the hand under his armpit, and took Mr. Kirby's other arm below the shoulder. He drew him up, slowly. On his feet he swayed, and Chester steadied him.

"I'm all right, just weak — except my head. . . . It hurts . . ."

"It's stopped bleeding though, sir. We can fix it at your house."

Chester turned him around and they moved toward the door. Elizabeth had stood frozen by Chester's words to her and the look

on his face. He had not noticed her after that. This time she knew what he thought. He was impatient with her. He thought her a coward. Well, she was. She had never done anything like the other girls. She had never nursed in a hospital. Blood made her sick. She had been terrified when Paul had been wounded at Seven Pines, and when Brose had been brought home.

All during the war she had done nothing but help her mother and Marie sew on clothes for Paul and Brose, and work on bandages — that, and make candles for her father to sell. Now they would need more than candles. Now he had no store, no money, nothing. And she had blamed her mother for talking of him while he lay here, dying.

Chester kicked back the door without looking around for her. Her father paused there, clinging to Chester, his head leaning on the supporting shoulder. Suddenly she ran toward them. She would not let Chester think she couldn't do anything. She wouldn't be a coward. Chester turned to look at her. She gazed full in his serious, harried face and felt a new triumph.

"Papa," she said. "Papa! Don't you worry. Uncle Virginius said they needed girls at the arsenal to work on the cap machines. I'll go down there to-morrow. I'll make us some money. Don't you worry."

Her father's sick, tired, aged face drew together in painful lines as he tried to smile. "My little baby working. . . . You mustn't think of that now. . . . Here you've got a fine young man. This is the young man you're going to marry, isn't it?"

"Yes, Papa, when we win our peace."

He smiled again, tearing at her heart. "Come on my other side, Elizabeth."

They stepped down into the street together. Chester looked across her father and she saw the pride in his face. He looked young now, as on that spring day when he had left to join the cavalry in his bright new uniform. He would never be so young again, so eager, but there was youth on him now, and in his eyes was the love she had waited so long to see.

Diagonally down on Third Street a door opened and light spilled into the street. In the doorway a powerful figure stood blocked out. Red lining on his cape flashed in the gas light and a yellow sash around his waist glowed like gold. She heard a mighty voice ring out and the man's head was flung back in laughter. The light flooded his flowing brown beard. Waving a cocked hat, with a plume fluttering from it, he bounded down the steps. Several soldiers followed, their spurs singing in the night. They swung up on horses and Chester muttered in an awed voice: "It's the General. It's General Stuart."

The horses clattered on the silent street and a banjo hummed, like a melody to the rhythm of the hoofs. Over the music the strong voices drifted back. *"If you want to have a good time, jine the cavalry. . . ."*

Her father's bowed head lifted. His weak voice was clear and firm. "It does n't matter what happens to us, any of us. As long as we have men like Jeb Stuart, we will win our peace."

They turned down Main. The city was silent again. Over the river sparks streaked the lowering sky above the Tredegar, moulding guns for the Confederacy.

CHAPTER XXIII

“City Council: A called meeting of the Council was held yesterday morning at half-past ten, the object being to appropriate additional funds for the purchase of clothing, shoes, and blankets for the Richmond troops in the field. . . .” — *Richmond Examiner*, January 6, 1864

Snow lay smooth and fresh on the street just as it had that night two years ago when she had stolen out to meet Brose in front of Centenary Church. Only to-night it was not falling softly, so that you could see almost the shapes of the separate flakes. It was a blinding white fog blown into her face by the January wind. To-night Brose would not be waiting, did not even know she was coming. To-night there was none of the excitement of her first secret rendezvous with its thrill of fear at her recklessness. That dimly remembered fear seemed childish, belonging with her little-girl fears of bogeys who existed in the imaginations of the negroes.

John, panting behind her, had never in his wildest imaginings evoked such a bogey as haunted her now. Yet she was unafraid. When she turned the corner at Seventh Street, she saw down Franklin lights glowing against the plain red brick façade of the house where Mrs. Lee lived and where the General now visited her. A year ago that same house, when General Lee's son Custis and other staff officers had their mess there, had called up her own world which Brose had been about to enter at the Chilton's calico party. She had feared that. Now she had reason to fear her own world, but somehow she did n't.

A fallen woman. At President Davis's reception, through the murmur of voices, the strain of violins, the rattle of teacups, those

words had cut directly to her. She had been dancing with the President's handsome secretary, Burton Harrison, and she had quickly glanced toward the direction from where the words seemed to have been spoken. First she saw Mrs. Chesnut, and plainly she had not spoken. Her clever, sardonic face was turned toward her husband, dancing with the lovely Hetty Cary. Beside her sat Mrs. Ould, the wife of the officer in charge of prisoner exchange. She was talking with Senator Hill. From the anticipation in his luminous eyes, Mildred knew he must be receiving an invitation to one of Mrs. Ould's suppers, where you could still feast on oysters and champagne, Virginia ham and jelly cake. Behind them stood the President. In the sickness of his sunken eyes, Mildred fancied she saw the memory of his little son Joe, who had recently died from a fall off the balcony. She never knew who had spoken, but, then as now, she had wondered if the new life in her womb marked her with a difference from her own kind.

She had known that difference since the beginning of her love for Brose. She had felt it at the Chilton party, before their love had been consummated. With the fulfillment of their love, and her awakened womanhood, had come pride. Now the pride had flowered, and since she had heard those words at the President's reception she feared that her secret glowed on her as it did inside. She feared, and yet she was curiously unafraid.

She turned into Broad Street, John puffing behind. A carriage drew up at the curb in front of the Richmond Theatre. Young officers, one with a star glistening on his collar, laughed loud as they paid the driver his twenty-five dollars for an hour's ride. Then lilted the gay voices of young girls, and she saw them tripping out of the carriage in their bright-colored, homemade gowns. Mildred pulled her muff, its fur worn down in patches to the skin, before her face. Below the white-pillared façade of the theatre a gaudy sign flashed: TICKET OF LEAVE MAN, by TOM TAYLOR. The laughing voices swept over her as she hurried past and they seemed to follow, carefree and innocent, the voice of the world that was forever closed to her.

She knew now that even when she had been integrated in that world, her soul had moved outside it. Always she had been driven away from it: toward the reckless and abandoned violence of Secession Night, toward the dark and rugged man with hot eyes glaring in a hawk's face; driven last fall toward those hours with him on the towpath between the canal and the river, where, with the water murmuring over the rocks, her desire had flared in the sombre beauty of the falling autumn afternoons. Now, alone, she was driven toward him through the desperate gayety of Broad Street.

At Ninth Street the crossing was slushy from carriages turning into Swan Tavern. Its lights glowed on the banked snow on the rambling porch, and loud singing voices floated out of the white frame tavern. *Yo-ho yo-ho . . . yo-ho-ho-ho . . . he is the darling of my heart . . . my Southern soldier boy . . .* All last fall she and Brose had heard that together when Sallie Partington, "The prima donna of the Confederacy," was making it popular in *Virginia Cavalier* at the New Richmond Theatre.

That song belonged with the autumn. It brought the mood of autumn into this snowy night. She knew that autumn's mood had never died within her, had not passed with the season. Always the most beautiful season to her, this year it had been lived with flowering love. As the desire had flowered and lived on, so had the autumn lived on during the bleakness of this bitter winter.

Out of the Powhatan House a soldier hobbled, huddled in a frayed overcoat. He paused in the amber glow on the snow in front of the doorway and stared at her. Autumn lay in his eyes too. Suddenly she realized it lay in the eyes of all her friends, melancholy and haunted, with a sombre gayety, a flushed color: the sad beauty of dying splendor.

Yo-ho yo-ho . . . yo-ho ho-ho . . . he is the darling of my heart . . . my Southern soldier boy . . . The song rang from a gray brick house, lighted to the dormer windows, the yellow touching the snow on the iron front balcony like candlelight on ermine. The street dipped and she stepped more carefully in the untrod snow. The autumn song dimmed and over its melody clanged the

bell in the Virginia Central depot. The harsh peal echoed over Shockoe Valley. His train was pulling in. She tried to hurry and slipped.

"Be careful, Miss Mildred." John's voice was muffled like his steps.

Across the street, Monumental Episcopal Church squatted in shadowy bulk through the white mist. The snow-tipped spikes of the iron fence were like bannered lances. Edgar Poe's mother had acted in the old theatre that had burned on that site. *One of my people saved a heap of ladies 'n' gennlemen in thet fire.* John had told her that when she was a child and he had taken her for drives in the hot afternoons of late summers, after she had returned from Kensington. It seemed to her now, crossing the deep snow at Fifteenth Street, that summer would never come again.

She heard the snarling and the grating and the puffing of the train rounding the foot of Shockoe Hill. She stopped on the slippery padded curb, with John breathing hard behind her. Then light wavered over the tracks and reflected on the snow-banked hill almost to the columns on the rear balcony of President Davis's White House. Only last week she had stared through the French doors of the reception room, past those columns, into the bared winter garden. She had known then she would have to wait alone on a dark street like this.

She had not known this sudden trembling would come and the embarrassment of having John beside her, in his silent way communicating his questions and concern. The grinding snarls of the engine wheezed into groans, the puffs into coughs, and sparks flew into the thick snow from its tall stack. It jerked and rattled and whined as it slowed for the station and she saw the cars behind it. For one moment she looked at John's expressionless face. She wanted advice, support. But she could n't ask him, or anyone.

She plodded on, slowly, down the steep hill. A brick garden wall rose beside her. The glow of the street light faded. At the recess of the wooden wall gate, the night gathered in blackness. She peered farther down the wall. The slave quarters were shuttered,

maybe abandoned. She glanced up at the rear of the dark house. Snow vanished into the shadows of the double balconies and the dim white pillars loomed like upreaching naked arms.

"We'll wait in here." She heard the shaky whisper of her voice. Why should she fear now? She shivered as she moved back in the corner of the gate recess. John lurked at the edge, peering miserably through the snow. "You come in here too, John." He sidled along the bricks and pressed himself in the opposite corner. She could scarcely see him. She heard his quick breaths and she heard the hollow blows of her heart. There was no other sound. The train had stopped.

When she felt that she could stand it no longer, she heard voices down at the depot. She sighed in a long breath. Thuds echoed, and rattled faintly. Muskets. Voices droned down there at the foot of the square and then loud shouts sang out. She identified the tones as commands, and her breath came easier. They would march for the Southside Depot at once. The murmuring voices were silent. The commands barked singly. Then a heavy shuffle whispered. She peered around the corner of the gate recess.

There they came, gray ghosts moving out from the brick station. *Column left . . . First squad, squad left . . . Hao-oh. . .* The head of the ghostly column swung up the hill into the snow slanting into their faces. The gray line kept swinging around, following the head of the column, and they came toward her with a muffled rhythm. The shadowy shapes bent forward. *Close up, men, close up. . .*

Another column loomed through the snow, wavering out into the street. *Column left . . . First squad. . .* The dusky gray forms trudging up the hill suddenly separated and she saw men, four abreast, muffled in rags, bent forward under shining rifles. Bayonets tinkled against canteens, empty haversacks flapped. Shuffling through the unbroken snow, they took no steps. Their knees bent, but their feet were not raised. The burlap bags wrapped around their feet whispered through the snow. *Close up, men, close up. . .*

The beats of her body moved with their beat, but there was no other movement in her. Rigid, she stared at each blurred and bearded face. Some were half hidden by rags tied around their heads. Flopped hat brims shadowed others. The lonely figures shuffling outside the column were officers. Those were the ones to watch. The last man passed, the guide sergeant, huddled under a piece of green carpet tied around his shoulders. *Squad left . . . hao-oh. . .*

At the foot of the street gray ghosts still turned up the hill into the slanting snow, with a muffled, weary rhythm. Another column took form, four men abreast, the solitary officers bent forward like the men. A flour sack was wrapped around the head of the first officer. By his walk she knew he was not Brose. The second officer passed, shrunken in a split dress overcoat. Brose could never make his shoulders that narrow. *Close up, men. . .* Shrouded in blankets and carpets and patched coats, shuffling on burlap feet, slithering on rawhide feet, they faded into the snow, again a ghostly gray line.

The next column emerged, frozen faces tilted against the snow. The ice glistened in their beards. The first officer wore a flat-crowned hat, its curled brim darkening his face. Her heart jammed and she swayed forward. Her legs had no strength. A Yankee blue overcoat loomed misty black on him. Brose still wore his gray caped overcoat. Her contracted breath eased out and blood seemed to flow again. *Close up, men, close up. . .* That was his voice!

She stumbled forward. She heard a cry from John, saw the thinned, grayed, cold faces suddenly clear before her, saw the way the bags were wrapped about them, saw the sacks flapping on their heads, saw the cracked, chapped, blood-red hands on the muskets. Then his face was close, dark under the black hat, dark with stubble of black beard. Only his eyes were bright, night light on a bayonet. His hands jumped out from under the ragged cape and she fell against him and felt his arms strong around her. He lifted her off the ground slightly, turning her the way he was marching.

His step had not broken. His lips were cold against her ear. "You'll have to march along," he whispered, "like a good soldier."

He lowered her gently. She glanced down at the high, smooth snow and she did not try to walk. She shuffled through it the way he did. She didn't make the muffled whispering sound that he did. She saw why. A piece of rawhide was wrapped over his feet, tied with thongs where the edges came together. The opening had slipped and snow oozed between the rawhide and his feet. She shuddered and clung more tightly to him. Her eyes lifted to his face. He had n't changed, as she always feared he would when she had n't seen him for a month. He smiled a little, but she sensed that he was waiting.

"Brose, I'll have to talk fast. I don't know what I would've done if you had n't written me the exact time you were passing through. I could n't write what I've got to tell you. Brose . . . darling . . ."

His voice came softly, like the muffled rhythm of the men. "Are you afraid?"

He did not understand. "Brose, you don't know!"

His arm tightened. "You're not afraid," he said again gently.

Studying the familiar look of him, she knew she did n't have to tell him. "Oh, my darling," she sighed. "You don't mind?"

"Only for you."

"I'll be a good soldier," she whispered.

He shook his head, the snow splaying off his hat. "But, good God, you should n't have to do this. I wanted to ask you to marry me when the war was over. Then you'd know what you were doing!"

"I know what I'm doing. Only I never wanted you to have to do anything . . ."

"Don't say that. It's bad enough you having to come here, like this. I love you so much—I want to marry you more than anything I ever wanted in my life. . . . If only there was a chance of peace . . ."

"I would n't want to wait for peace anyway."

"Well, we won't. . . . Look, you'll have to leave me now."

We're coming into that street light. To-night we're taking the Weldon train and we'll be in Carolina by to-morrow. I'll write you right away. I'll propose, like none of this ever happened. Then you write me a date, and I'll get a furlough as soon as I can."

"I'm sorry, darling, it had to happen like this, but I'm glad too. . . . Oh, Brose, I love you so!"

"I love you, Mildred." She had never heard his voice like that before. Then his arms released her and he moved her gently away.

The reflection of the street light washed under her feet. She shuffled, like the men, through the snow. John stood on the curb. He helped her up.

"Miss Mildred . . ."

She shook her head to silence him. There had been no good-bye. She whirled, not caring if the soldiers did see her. His platoon marched right under the street light. She saw the light gleaming in the snow on his black hat. Bent forward again, his hands drawn up under his cape, he shuffled alone outside the column. She stared until the white mist on the far side of the light swallowed him up. Where he had walked, the light gleamed bright on his tracks in the snow. Color caught her gaze. Red blots of blood obliterated every other image. Her world was reduced to the dull red in the churned snow where the men had trudged in their bur-lap, to the bright red where he had walked alone. She didn't know she had swayed until she felt John's hands against her elbows. She leaned there, steadying herself, closing her eyes tight, hearing the muffled whisper of the gray ghosts shuffling past. *Close up, men, close up. . . .*

February 1864

CHAPTER XXIV

“Resolved, that our country and the very existence of the best government ever instituted by man are imperiled by the most causeless and wicked rebellion that the world has ever seen, and believing . . . that the only hope of saving this country . . . is by the power of the sword, we are for the most vigorous prosecution of the war until the constitution and the laws shall be enforced . . . in all parts of the United States . . . and to that end we oppose any armistice or proposition for peace. . . .”
—*United States House of Representatives, quoted in the Richmond Whig, February 20, 1864*

“This is what brought about the French Revolution,” Virginius said. “Thoughtless frivolity while the populace starved.”

St. George turned to him, for a moment doubting his seriousness. When he saw the gloomy, tired countenance, the eyes reproachful above their sagging pouches, he was disturbed for his friend.

“Virginius, this frivolity is healthful. But for some outlet they could n’t continue the struggle. These people are past hope and beyond fear. It is a question of distractions like this or surrender.”

“I’m not past hope.”

“We all have n’t your — shall I say, gift for optimism?”

The war clerk turned to face him squarely. There was still strength in his worn face when he was aroused. “Do I understand that you, and all these society people, have no hope for our success?”

St. George paused before that intense look. “You are too literal,” he said gently. “I don’t think these people have resigned themselves to submission to the United States, but you must admit

that peace seems a long way off, and peace on our terms increasingly doubtful."

"The only terms for peace are the independence of the Confederacy. Do you mean that seems doubtful?"

This passionate devotion to the Confederacy did not belong with the man's position in life, or his temperament. St. George felt again the impulse to ask the reason for his fanaticism. There must be something hidden in the war clerk's character that would explain it. But the curtain was rising on the play. So he said: "Rather, say our independence seems remote."

"So does death. But I should prefer it to our failure."

That, the old beau felt, had no answer. He turned toward the improvised stage and looked at the daughters and granddaughters and grandsons of his contemporaries impersonating characters from *The Rivals*. Constance Cary, in a white muslin dress with blue ribbons in a lace negligee cap, was a lovely child, and delightful, he thought, as Lydia Languish. He saw her cousin, Hetty, in the drawing-room audience. A lovely girl. That was one of the Pegram boys with her. He was a fine officer, they said. His sisters, St. George recalled, had been models for that artist's painting of Latané's funeral. How time changed things. It had been a great and distressing event then, in the summer of '62, when the Yankees refused Mrs. Brockenbrough's request for a minister of the Lord to give a Christian burial to the young captain who had been the sole casualty of Stuart's ride around McClellan. Now they buried them like mules, only they removed their shoes first — if they had any shoes.

Ah, there was Mary Triplett. She was the most beautiful of them all. His friends were wrong when they claimed that Richmond had no belles like those of the thirties. It was a sad thing to look at a girl like Mary Triplett, or Lizzie Cabell, or Mattie Ould, and know that never again would such as they be for you. Not once again before he died would he touch the soft, young flesh, would parted lips wait for him, or eager eyes look up at him as they looked now at the young soldiers. Yet, he had no envy for those soldiers: that Haxall

boy, and the young general, Edward Johnson, and Wade Hampton's fine-looking son Preston, and that magnificently moustached Prussian giant, von Borcke, heroic with his wound, and that blond-bearded Texan, General John Hood, who had lost his leg at Chickamauga. Hood watched the play with a deepening scowl and his blue-gray eyes flashed as he glared at the stage. Frank Ward was impersonating Bob Acres and, if one enjoyed the illusion of the stage, he was very adequate. St. George wondered at the Texan's ire until he saw him turn to Mrs. Chesnut and blurt:—

"I believe that Acres fellow is a coward."

St. George smothered a chuckle. General Breckenridge, sitting behind Hood, must have heard it. He turned, grinning, and gestured toward the big Texan. "He's better than the play."

"By God," Virginius muttered, "Hood should n't be ridiculed. Those poor fellows, they know nothing but the war."

"You're right, Virginius." None of these young people knew anything but the war. And so many, after the war, would be dead. Who would build the state again, when there was peace? He glanced at the morose face of his friend. Virginius must have infected him with his gloom. Here he was in the charming home of the Ives, surrounded by delightful people, and his thoughts ran to old age, and death.

He looked back at the stage. Mrs. Clay was playing her part of Mrs. Malaprop like a professional. Professional actors should all be suspect since they had detected Hilary Adair in spy work. St. George had somehow hated to see him hang. He had had great personal beauty and charm, and great courage, great courage. Not to save his own skin would he implicate his confederates in Richmond. But he had them, all right, in some branch of the War Offices—Quartermaster, Medical, Ordnance. He had known too much for a casual visitor to the city.

The curtain fell and servants hurried in to turn up the lights.

"Damned nonsense," Virginius grumbled, "with gold at twenty-five to one, spending money on frivolities."

"Being long-faced, Virginius, will not remedy the blunders of our Treasury Department, nor compensate for loss of all hope of European recognition."

"No, but those who have enough should help the starving in the city and in the army, instead of —"

"Virginius, people have to go on living. These women and older men are helping these soldiers now, more by this than by food."

"Look at that fat Jew, Benjamin, over there, with his smug grocer's smile," the war clerk said bitterly. "Do you think he's helping? He's never deprived himself of his Havanas and his port."

"Why should he? He's been a good Secretary of State, and he's a clever man." St. George looked at the bland, shrewd face smiling out of its frame of black jaw-line beard and curly hair.

"He's been a good secretary to Davis, an echo, a rubber stamp, a —"

"Better a good rubber stamp than one noisy and inefficient. Suppose he babbled like Congress?"

"Ah, Congress! A debating society. When I think of their interminable bickerings among themselves and with the President, while General Lee pleads for men —"

"Don't think of it to-night, Virginius." St. George laid his hand on his friend's shoulder. "Try to enjoy this evening. There are a lot of people here with whom you could talk with profit."

Virginius shook his head. "I no longer enjoy anything." He stood up suddenly. His wasted body was shaking. "I must leave you here, Saint. I'm sorry. I'm in no mood for such distractions. Will you excuse me?"

"Why, certainly." St. George arose too, stiffly, his knees refusing to bend readily. He knew a real alarm for his friend.

"Forgive me my — fanaticism. I seem to hate everything. It's myself I hate."

"Virginius, my friend, where are you going in this mood?"

"Back to my library. That's the only place where I find any peace. Good night."

St. George watched his stiff figure move through the laughing groups, brush against the homemade and made-over evening gowns, shadow the shined uniforms, blot out for a moment Hood's crutch, and then disappear into the hallway.

The servants hurried to lower the lights. The gay groups broke up and voices dimmed. Across the room, near Quartermaster General Myers, a frocked clergyman stared at the guests with granite gray eyes. He was a stocky man with wide square shoulders, and a fine mane of gray hair above his florid face. Did Donovan, the most successful of their spies, suspect anyone here? St. George would have to speak with him after the performance. Perhaps he could offer a clue as to Adair's confederates.

Then the curtain went up and the old beau sat down. The smell of perfumed women around him was good.

"The war . . . was wickedly, and against all our . . . earnest efforts to the contrary, forced upon us. . . . Instead of conducting the war as betwixt two military and political organizations, it is a war against the whole population. . . . Homes are pillaged and burned. Mills and implements of agriculture are destroyed. Helpless women have been exposed to . . . dishonor. . . . Citizens have been murdered. . . . The sad story of the wrongs and indignities endured by those states which have been in . . . possession of the enemy, will give us the best evidences of the consequences of subjugation. . . ."

—*Confederate House of Representatives, February 1864*

The sickening smell was the first thing Paul noticed. It was worse than dead fish, though nothing like it. It was like nothing he had ever smelled. Then the bestial shouting of the prisoners struck him, shook him, bewildering and terrifying. It was like being in a forest filled with howling beasts. He kept his eyes on the floor.

He could see the old ruts, made by the rollers holding the hogsheads when the prison had been a warehouse. At the end, where a barred and narrow window overlooked the brown canal, the guard motioned to a dark stairwell. The guard at the top held his bayonet at Paul's chest until he showed his papers and told him what he wanted.

"You'll find yoh Private Fitzhugh at the las' cell."

It was quieter up here, though colder. These men must all be like Cousin Leroy, waiting for court-martial, and not like the hardened army criminals below. The strange terror aroused by the shouting men receded and left him nervous as he neared Cousin Leroy's cell. Paul did n't know him very well. It had been seven or eight years since he had seen his cousin. Granny used to say it was a shame the way Mother had turned her children away from their own flesh and blood, but Mother had always said she would n't have her children growing up to talk like niggers just because Leroy's father was brother to hers. It was true that Cousin Leroy's wife was sort of ignorant and uneducated, but she had been very nice and he and Elizabeth liked her. They thought it was really because Leroy's father had killed a man once; Brose said they were crazy, that Mother would as lief kill a man herself.

Paul was n't sure he would remember Cousin Leroy. What he remembered most about going to see him was his house. Mother said it was no better than a slave shack. It was only a small one-room house with a detached kitchen hut, but there had been something both homelike and exciting about it. The woods were all around it and when they were kids they used to play Indian in them, and later Cousin Leroy took them rabbit hunting with a shotgun.

Paul stopped at the last cell and saw a row of wild, haunted, pleading eyes staring out of ragged beards, black skins, and dirty bars.

"Paul!"

He would n't have recognized his cousin; he looked like all the others. The other eyes and chapped hands and straggly beards

faded back into the cell, and Paul stood speechless, gaping at the beaten, broken ragamuffin shaking with the cold — the man who had once taken him rabbit hunting and laughed with the sun through the trees shining on his tanned face.

"Paul," he cried, "I thought nobody would never come 'n' git me out 'en heah. They hung some out 'en heah yestiddy. They hung moh the day befoh. I don't mind bein' shot. I seen 'em shot when I was with Old Jack. He formed us in a square and we all stood round an open grave and watched the deserter marched up to the grave, and when they shot him he fell in and we had to march around the grave 'n' look at him layin' theah in his deserter's grave. That was awful, Paul, but I would n't mind that. It's the hangin'. You ain't goin' let 'em hang me, are you, Paul?"

Paul was so sick he could n't answer. Then Cousin Leroy started to babble again and Paul had to say something to keep from hearing him.

"Cousin Leroy, if you 'll just tell me what's the trouble, I'll tell Uncle Virginus and he'll see what he can do. Tell me what happened. How did you come to desert?"

"That's it, Paul, that's it," he screamed. "I ain't never deserted. I never would desert; so long as Marse Robert he wants to fit, I'll fit. But I had to go home 'n' look after Lottie 'n' the chillun. Look heah, Paul, heah's the letter I got from Lottie." His black-tipped, brown-streaked, red-chapped hand dug in the filthy rags. "This heah is what Lottie wrote me. I went home on account of that 'n' I intended comin' back. I *was* comin' back when Winder's men got me. I was on my way back 'n' nothing I said would do no good. Nothing would do but they git me in heah in Castle Thunder foh to hang . . ."

"Let me see the letter," Paul said hoarsely.

It was an old piece of wallpaper all folded over with the address printed on the outside in an almost unreadable scrawl. Inside, the writing was worse. Paul held it up to the dim light and puzzled at it while Cousin Leroy went on saying, "You can see I just came

home on account o' that, 'n' soon 's I fixed things I was on my way back. *I wanna fit!*"

"DER LEROY I sho do hate come a botheren you when you air tryen to fit the Yankees offen us but if somethen doan happen soon i am afriad i en the chillen will not be her when you come back on account we aint got nuthen to eat aint had nuthen to eat now ova a weak it is so cole i put the chillen to bed cass they aint no coats and shus i put the carpet ova them but seems lik they cry all the time en i cant make no fire i am too weak to cut wood en the groun is cold on my bar feet i picked up all the chips in the woodshed en now they aint nuthen to burn doan you reckon ginral Lee let you come home iffen he nu so you could git us warm en somethen to eat en then you can go back en fit the Yankees some mo i never want you to stop fitten the Yankees but i want i en the chillen to be her when you come bak love from yo wife Lottie x x thes marks mad by the chillen"

Paul kept looking at the letter after he finished reading it, so he could keep the tears back. Then he turned around and quickly rubbed his hand across his eyes. He could n't look at those wildly pleading ones.

"I'll take this letter to Uncle Virginus," he said, trying to keep his voice steady.

"Will he git me out 'en heah, Paul? I wanna fit, but I just had to git back and look after Lottie 'n' the chillun. You know my pay ain't worth no moh than fifty cents a month, when I git it, 'n' —"

"He'll try, Cousin Leroy."

"He ain't no kin of mine rightly, but —"

"He'll do all he can, Cousin Leroy." He started to back away.

"You tell him I fixed up Lottie 'n' the chillun now so 's I can fit till I rightly gits a furlough."

"You did attend to them?" Paul had backed off, ready to turn.

"Sho! Sho! I cut 'em enough wood to last 'em all year. I cut the hide off'en a dead mule on the way down heah 'n' I made 'em all shoes out'en it. Little Roy was proud as a rooster, wearin' them real soljuh shoes."

"And you got them something to eat?"

Cousin Leroy did n't answer right away. He seemed to be studying Paul. Then he beckoned him to come closer. He whispered: "I got 'em some rats. I killed 'n' fried 'em myself, told Lottie 't was squirrel meat. Taste like squirrel meat, too, Paul."

Paul whirled and hurried over the rough floor, down the dark stairwell, and into the bestial shouting of the prisoners on the floor below.

"The Congress of the Confederate States of America do enact; that . . . all white men, residents of the Confederate States, between the ages of seventeen and fifty, shall be in the military service of the Confederate States for the war . . . that those who have furnished substitutes be no longer exempted for reason thereof. . . ."—*Adj. & Insp. General's Office, March 1, 1864*

"Gentlemen, place your bets, please."

The gambler's voice was soft, almost purring, and he spoke with a precision curious in Richmond, but which was not Yankee, either.

Philip threw down a new five-hundred-dollar bill with the likeness of Stonewall Jackson engraved in the centre. "Put all the chips for that on the red."

"Yes, Lieutenant Parramore." The gambler showed glittering teeth in the white leather of his face. Under the heavy chandelier everything about him glittered: black hair and diamond studs, black broadcloth and white linen, black brocade and crested ring. He was a Spaniard, they said, and the most dangerous gambler in Richmond. He only took the main table when big money was up, and Philip took that as a mark of deference to himself. The Spaniard was n't deferential to many people.

Beside Philip, Lorenzo Duke shuffled uneasily. "You sho are

plungin' some, Philip. You're goin' into yoh third thousand."

Philip turned to him with a condescending smile. Lorenzo Duke, at twenty-four, was pinched with the same thrifty shrewdness of his father; but his thin lips, held tightly together, were strongly touched with sensuality. Nothing else in his cold face suggested it, but Philip knew where he spent his money. Philip said lightly:—

"What is the good of money but to enjoy it?" He heard the wheel whirring, but he did not look. He liked the gesture of indifference.

Lorenzo fixed him with a gaze of appraisal. "That money mought not come so easy now that I've gotta be an impressment agent for the government to keep out of the army."

"Thirty-two, gentlemen. Even and red."

Philip turned, tried to hide the smile of triumph. The chips were shoved in front of him. He was conscious of the eyes of the other players. One man in particular watched him. He was a stocky man with wide square shoulders, and granite gray eyes stared out of a florid face. He had a fine mane of gray hair. Philip divided the chips. "These on the red; these on odd."

"Your luck is changing, Lieutenant Parramore," the gambler said.

Philip looked into the glittery black eyes. A flash of understanding passed between them. Like wine, the approbation made him heady, and he turned back to Lorenzo with the smile still on his face.

"You need n't worry about me, Renze."

"Maybe you don't catch on." Lorenzo's face grew very stiff, like his father's. "When I start workin' as an impressment agent, we won't be sellin' you many drugs no moh."

"I've been prepared for that. The blockade has gotten so stringent that you can't get through much contraband anyway. Don't you worry about me." He heard the intoxicating whir of the wheel. He would n't look at it. He enjoyed the bewilderment on Lorenzo Duke's face.

"The money you've saved won't last you long the way the gold

exchange is droppin'. That five-hundred-dollar bill ain't worth over twenty dollars now, and a year from now it won't be worth over five."

"Nineteen, gentlemen. Red and odd."

Philip smiled. "You heard what the Spaniard said, Renze. My luck is running in. I'm beyond all your penny pinching." He divided the chips again. "Odd and black," he said to the gambler.

When he turned back Lorenzo was brick red. In anger he showed his difference from his father. He had none of the older man's servile impotence.

"A little run of luck ain't enough to put you above us. The government mought've shut down on conscripts so's I have to be an impressment agent, and serve in this damn local defense too, but you ain't through with the Dukes yet. It'll take moh than luck for that."

A fine-looking negro, a former butler on a River plantation, bowed before them over a tray containing champagne and wine bottles, goblets, and wrought-leather boxes of Havana cigars. "Courtesy of the house, gentlemen."

Lorenzo shook his head. The negro, the broad satin lapels of his livery gleaming under the bright lights, handed Philip a glass of champagne, lit the cigar he selected. Philip sipped the wine and smiled through the rich, heavy smoke.

"It is more than luck, Lorenzo," he said. "You see, you and your father thought you were using me. But it was the other way around. Our mutual value is over. I'm going on from here—while you fight with the locals."

"You're gittin' too big for yoh britches." Lorenzo was taut with rage.

Philip stifled his instinct to back away. He knew the Dukes did n't fight that way. He glanced at Lorenzo's ill-fitting evening clothes and smiled. "Not the way I have my trousers cut."

"Seven, gentlemen. Odd and black."

Still smiling, superior, taunting, he turned to the table. "I'll cash those in."

As he leaned forward he saw with pride the beautifully finished cadet gray cloth of his tunic, the gleaming brass buttons, on his cuff the dash of the black ribbon of the Medical Department. As the four one-thousand-dollar bills were pushed toward him he felt fixed on him again the granite gray eyes of the stocky man with the florid face. Philip glanced at him. He took in the flashy waistcoat of the new and badly cut evening suit, the oversized ring, the mane of grizzled gray hair. The man smiled as if he wanted to speak. For one flash Philip saw himself through the awed eyes of one of the newly rich cattle buyers. He smiled faintly in return.

Stuffing the bills carelessly in his inside pocket, he turned, looked beyond the scowling Lorenzo, and saw himself in the admiring eyes of all the men in the room. They lounged on soft sofas in front of the red velvet curtains over the windows. The smoke of their cigars misted the room with rich fragrance, the tinkle of their champagne glasses evoked an atmosphere of rich well-being. Here and there the flash of gold braid on the sleeve of an officer touched the scene with color and authority. The murmur of male voices filled him with an exultant sense of power. He turned to the group standing in front of the bright flame in the fireplace. Facing them, he drained his glass. At last he was one with life.

CHAPTER XXV

"Officers and Men: You have been selected from brigades . . . as a picked command to attempt a desperate undertaking. . . . We hope to release the prisoners from Belle Isle . . . and . . . cross James River into Richmond . . . exhorting the released prisoners to burn the hateful city; and do not allow the rebel leader, Davis, and his traitorous crew to escape. . . . U. DAHLGREN." — *Richmond newspapers, March 1864, from orders reputed to have been found upon the body of Colonel Dahlgren, U. S. Cavalry*

During the two months Mildred had waited for Brose to be furloughed, she lost the power to conceive of a marriage between them taking place. As the weeks dragged by the very idea of it seemed unreal, and the thought of Brose as a husband appeared like a little girl's dream of older men who loved her. Even now that the ceremony had been performed and the minister had gone, it still seemed impossible. It was as though their love were still a secret, as the real part was still hidden from her family. Maybe her knowledge, which had been such a cruel burden, had something to do with her feelings. But it was more than the secret of a child who would be born in six months; it was that Brose had been her lover, and was still, and would always be.

She glanced toward the man whose wife she had become half an hour before. Surely he had no look of a husband, as he stood talking with her mother. He leaned against the mantel, his face reflecting the fire. The tight jacket, with its shining double rows of buttons, pulled across his shoulders, and the new, home-dyed butternut trousers hung baggily. Both were borrowed from men

in his regiment, as were the riding boots tucked under his striped trousers. To her his motley uniform seemed fitting. He would have lost something in a frock coat with a black silk cravat flowing out of a wing collar. He would have lost that quality which kept him even now, surrounded by her solemn family, from seeming like a husband.

Mildred saw that her mother was also thinking Brose did not seem like a husband, and it bothered her. He talked with the careless ease he had had with Mrs. Chilton at the calico party. But Mrs. Wade expected different behavior. She was doing her best to be a good mother, as she had since her first collapse. When Mildred had told her, she cried hysterically, took to her room, and refused to have any part in the wedding. Aunt Abbie had persuaded her, with the help of Cousin Flora's blunt advice, toward this final resignation. "We must accept what the good Lord sees fit to send us," she had patiently repeated. Now Mrs. Wade was making a pitiful effort to be the bride's mother, but Brose was not being a son-in-law.

He would never be a son-in-law as her mother understood it, nor a husband as anyone understood it but herself. They would never know that was why she loved him. But her family did n't matter now, any more than they had since she first went to him. Nothing mattered now, not even the secret of her child, before the nearness of the night when she would yield to him her final intimacy.

"My dear, at the risk of appearing tactless, I must say that if your handsome father were here now, he would admit he had been wrong."

Startled, she turned to face St. George Paxton, smiling, suave, emotionless. He said gently, "No one could see you so radiant and not know that you were doing what is right for you."

"Thank you, St. George." Her smile came from her heart. "I'm the only one who thought so since I first met him."

"I know, your father talked to me of it. Your parents thought you strange, my child, because your desires were not theirs." A remote smile played about his lips. "As I near eighty, I no longer

find it strange that one wants what he instinctively knows will make him happy. I am surprised only at the instinct, and the courage to follow it. Your husband showed fine instincts of his own, and excellent taste, too, in waiting until he captured the most beautiful bride I ever had the pleasure to observe . . . and I thought I had seen the superlative when I saw your mother married in this very gown."

"St. George, you've made me happier than I was, and that's a lot." She laughed lightly. "And this is a promise: you'll be the first guest in our home when peace comes and . . . and we have a home."

The old beau bowed. His gray hair was streaked faintly with black and purple from the dye he could no longer afford. "I shall be honored, though I do hope that the guest shall not have to wait so interminably for his wine."

"I think the families have forgotten you are a guest, they're so busy getting acquainted. I'll see that you receive an extra glass of champagne. Did you know that Uncle Virginius gave it to us as a wedding present?"

"I love that man." His tone was conversational. "His friendship is all that the war has given me. It worries me the way he has given his whole life to the Confederacy."

She followed his gaze to Virginius Kirby, standing alone in the mantel recess, his gloomy eyes on the groups gathered around the hearth. His wife silently received the torrent of Cousin Flora, and you could not say whether she listened or no. She had been attractively slender, no doubt, when she was younger, but now she was thin and peaked. Worry had blotted out all but traces of a sweetness which once must have been appealing. In her threadbare clothes, it was evident that she came of good people, even if Mildred had n't known she was a Sheppard from the Valley. Her son, like a young soldier at attention, very politely listened to Cousin Flora. He had poise for a fifteen-year-old boy, and self-reliance; but after all, as sergeant in Dennis's boys' company, he was one of Richmond's defenders.

Mrs. Kirby stood straight and rigid between Sheppard Kirby and Brose, taking no part in the conversation. Disapproval marked every line of her. She was suffering grimly what she did n't like. Mildred had never understood Mrs. Kirby's hatred of her until now. She felt, what Elizabeth so plainly showed, that the Kirbys did not belong with the Wades. She probably thought Mildred was not woman enough for Brose. A little of Mrs. Kirby's grim passion touched Mildred then; Mrs. Kirby would live to change that opinion.

Glancing toward Elizabeth, she forgot her momentary hardening. The poor thing had been uneasy since she entered the house and, staying close to her father, she looked sweeter in her flowered dress than she would ever know. Mr. Kirby looked neither ill at ease nor at home. In a shiny black suit and a neat cravat in a frayed collar, he looked most of all like a spectator at an occasion which concerned him very little. His kindness, which Mildred so well remembered, was crushed in him, like everything else. His life was finished. He would never be more than a spectator again. She turned away from the gentle man because at this moment she wanted no sadness to touch her.

The only people in the room actually enjoying themselves were the two old ladies seated on the green sofa. Brose's Granny cackled about life in the country and Aunt Abbie, in answering her, lived over the old years close to her heart. "People then wa'n't like they are now," Granny was saying. "That they were n't," Aunt Abbie shook her head. "I remember in the War of 1812 . . ."

Mildred took St. George's arm. "I don't think I'll ever catch Mother's glance," she said. "She's so intent on Brose. We'll start a slow movement to attract her."

"A restive movement among the guests."

"Yes, in the general direction of the feast. And an elegant feast it is to be. Turkey, fruit and nut cake, and —"

"Let us make the movement more restive. With turkeys at one hundred dollars, I never hoped to delight my palate with one again, and cakes . . ."

"To tell the truth, the cake is a concoction sweetened with sorghum on which the Kirby cook collaborated with John. So don't set your hopes too high."

"But turkey is turkey."

"Yes . . . even though this one was a little bit wild. He was shot by Paul, Brose's brother, and sent to us as his gift. He could n't get leave and . . . What was that?"

A tremor passed through the old beau's arm and he stopped short. She saw that everyone had ceased all movement. There was the painfully familiar frozen group of guests that she had seen in so many homes so many times. The only sound was the crackle of the log fire, pine logs John had cut in the woods.

Outside the bell pealed again. It was not frantic, like the tocsins used to be. Over the city the bell boomed gently, almost apologetic, like church bells on a hot summer night. A dry sigh breathed through the room and the groups broke in sudden, disordered movement. Their voices started up, anxious and alarmed, but Mildred was aware only of Brose. He was coming toward her, no expression on his face at all. A moment before he had been grinning at her mother. Now he was a soldier. She ran toward him and pressed herself against him. His arms, without force, held her. She burrowed her face between his chest and arm, trying to shut out the sounds.

Someone had opened the front door, for the raw March wind whistled through the hall. Then she heard St. George Paxton's voice cracking as he shouted questions. Dim, hurrying voices floated in answer. Running feet echoed on the sidewalk and the fierce clatter of hoofs rang off flagstones. Brose stirred and she clung tighter to him. In the distance, a bugle called "Assembly." Brose's arms fell away and he tried to step back. She clutched at him. Then she felt his calloused hand under her chin. She had n't known she was crying until she tried to see him through a blur of tears.

"Mildred, it's a cavalry attack — from the north and west, two of them together. They're calling out the Locals. There's not a

company of regular troops within twenty miles of Richmond. I—I've got—"

"No! No, Brose, you can't go."

"Mildred, I've got to." She'd never heard his voice like that before, so dry and hard it was. He pulled backward, straining against her arms.

Her fingers clutched the cloth of the tight jacket with a passionate frenzy. "Not on our wedding day. Don't you understand . . . not now of all times. . . ."

"Better I help hold them than that they get here now."

"They could n't do anything to us if they did. But they can do something to you. Oh, God, Brose, I'll do anything you ever ask me if you just don't go now."

"I can't stay here when my father and young cousin are going."

"You would n't stay here even if they were n't going!" She let him slip through her fingers. "I know. It's fighting you like."

His rough hand closed over her mouth. "Don't talk to me like that."

Her lips felt bruised after he took his hand away. She felt punished, beaten by him, and all the passionate strength drained from her. She heard St. George's voice close by, but she could n't raise her head.

"I deplore this necessity of deserting in the face of the enemy, but Mrs. Paxton is alone at home. She's too feeble even to leave her bed."

"That's all right, Mr. Paxton." Brose cut him short. "We've all got to go."

"Then," came the old gentleman's voice, "good-bye to you both, and God bless you."

Then her mother and Cousin Flora were screaming and hammering at her. Brose was answering them, calmly, dry and hard.

"You-all stay right here, and nothing will happen."

"But the riffraff . . . In these times . . . The negroes might take this occasion . . . John heard of some plot to slay us in our . . . The criminals could be turned loose on . . . Your own

father's store was . . ." Then, young and clear through women's incoherence, "Cousin Brose, here's your overcoat."

That boy's voice shamed her. He had assumed Brose would go. She raised her head. She glimpsed the hovering women, pale and stricken, and she centred her gaze on Sheppard Kirby, erect in his thin overcoat, holding out Brose's coat with the old black hat on top. Brose grabbed up the hat, under which a worn leather holster shone and the butt of a revolver glinted dully. Brose passed that to his uncle. "You keep this," he said. "I'll get something on the way." He reached for the coat.

Mildred saw the faded, frayed, and patched overcoat, which she had so often touched with her face. The cape, under which he had warmed his hands that January night, hung down. Suddenly she jerked it out of his hands and held it up for him.

Something in her look made the women turn away, and they stood alone. That curious expression which she had noticed last fall flitted across Brose's face. It suggested a depth of feeling of which he himself was unaware, and suggested to her a deeper passion than their first desire. Their emotion now transcended the violence of the war life that had first brought them together, but still it belonged to that violence and expressed itself through it. Knowing that, she knew he had to go.

"Darling," she cried, "I didn't mean anything I said. I just wanted so much to give you everything I have to give . . . but I know that you must go and . . . and I'll wait."

He pulled her to him and there was strength in his arms now. He held her there a moment and she could feel the pounding of his heart. When he spoke, his voice vibrated through her as though it were passing from his body into hers. "You know I hate like hell to go." Then he released her quickly.

She didn't grasp at him this time. She stood very still and watched him stalk across the room, his shoulders swaying. At the door his mother was waiting. Elizabeth was crying, clinging to her father. Nothing was changed in Mr. Kirby's tired face. Mrs. Kirby threw her arms around Brose, quick and fierce,

and then she stepped back. Her face was like flint. Only her black eyes, like his, bared the emotion hot within her.

Mildred followed him slowly into the hallway. Her mother clustered with the old women, looking everywhere, seeing nothing. Charles Kirby glanced once at his wife and for that moment he was alive. Then he opened the door.

Elizabeth grabbed his hand and kissed it. "Oh, Papa . . ."

"Come on, Cousin Charles," Sheppard said.

He had turned his back on his parents. Virginius Kirby stared at him with pride and fear and something indefinable. The boy's mother, huddling against the wall, had only fear. She wanted to speak, but she was afraid of that too.

The boy crossed the threshold with Charles Kirby. Brose glanced once at Mildred and smiled. He followed them. Voices rushed after them.

"Good-bye, Lieutenant Kirby . . . Look out for yourself, young man . . . Good-bye, son . . . Look after Sheppard, Brose . . . Good-bye, good-bye . . . Oh, my boy . . ."

A light drizzle dripped through the trees. The three men were at the gate. They looked back and waved. Elizabeth was crying softly. Mrs. Virginius Kirby broke and wept soundlessly. In the distance, for the first time, muskets rattled faintly, and thunder rumbled on the Richmond side of the Chickahominy.

Later in the afternoon, they ate the wedding dinner. At dusk they heard light firing west of the river, near the river, and very close to the city. Then the firing ceased. There was no sound in the city.

John came in and lit the lamps. Shortly after night fell there was a sharp knock on the door. They all started up. Uncle Virginius fingered the revolver, his face grayer than ever.

"Have you any weapons in the house, Mrs. Wade?" The cold harshness of Mrs. Kirby's voice was loud and scary in the silence. Her mouth was drawn down as Mildred had seen it before.

"A pair of dueling pistols," her mother said weakly.

The knock echoed through the house, louder. John stood in the doorway to the hall, waiting for directions. The whites of his eyes looked large against his slack, black face.

"Will you get them, please?" Mrs. Kirby demanded.

"Why . . . why . . . if you think we might need them . . . will you come with me . . ." She rose, very white, and walked slowly to the doorway. Mrs. Kirby joined her. The outside door was vibrating with the pounding. The two women hurried into the hall and she heard them mounting the stairs.

A voice rose thinly in shouts outside. "It's Philip Parramore, Lieutenant Parramore. Open the door, in the name of God."

"Oh." Uncle Virginus sagged in relief. "That's Charles's former clerk, a medical purveyor. He might have some news."

"Then let him in, John," Mildred said.

"Oh, Mildred." It was Elizabeth. Her lips were trembling and she looked as though she might fall. Mildred went to her and put her arm around the bony shoulders. The girl clung to her. "I'm so afraid about Papa . . ."

"*Where's Mr. Kirby?*" There was a theatrical touch about the man standing in the doorway. His gray tunic was too finely tailored, the line of white linen above his black collar too white and even, the brass buttons too bright. He held a pair of doeskin gauntlets, which he was twisting around as he moved into the room. "Where's Mr. Kirby?" His voice was pleading.

"He's out defending his city as you should be. I'm Mrs. Kirby." She stood behind him, dark and hostile, holding the wrought-silver butt of the dueling pistol as though she knew how to use it.

The man spun around and gave a short, ridiculous bow.

"Don't you remember me? — Philip Parramore. I was your husband's —"

"I remember you. You were afraid to fight. What do you want here?"

"Oh, it's terrible, terrible. I went to your house to see Mr. Kirby

and then I remembered that Brose was getting married to Miss Wade . . .”

“What’s terrible?” The words fell like stones at him.

“This raid . . . the authorities think I had something to do with it, was working from the inside. . . . Somebody’s negligence let those raiders get within our fortifications when there’s not a soldier in Richmond . . . and they’re looking for a scapegoat.”

“Why do they suspect you?”

“Because I’ve accepted a few bribes from a wholesaler to favor his house. But that’s nothing to be hanged for!”

“What makes you think it is n’t? My husband was forced out of his drug business because the likes of you made prices so high he could n’t buy goods. You did that, to the man who saved you, so you could deck yourself in a pretty uniform — like that.” She gestured with the gun barrel.

“Please, Mrs. Kirby, I never meant you any harm. I’d do anything for Mr. Kirby. He knows that — that’s why I came to him when I heard they were after me. Oh, if only he were here now . . .”

“He’s not and you’d better clear out.”

“No, for the love of God, don’t put me out. They’d hang me sure.”

“I don’t think we should make him leave, Mrs. Kirby.” Mrs. Wade stood behind her, bewildered and frightened, but plainly disturbed by the demands of her code on a stranger within her home. “Don’t you think it best to let the men decide?”

“No.”

Uncle Virginius cleared his throat. “I think you’d better, Judy. After all, if he wants to talk to Charles . . .”

“You think that with your own son out there fighting?”

“Yes, yes!” Virginius’ wife, sitting near the windows, flung out her hands. “Let the poor thing stay. Anything not to have more suffering.”

Parramore started to speak.

“Please don’t talk.” Mildred was surprised to hear her own voice.

The man had made her sick. "We're all upset; I'm sorry. Just have a seat and be quiet."

Mrs. Kirby included them all in one black look of contempt and strode toward the seat by the fire. She had been there since the men left. She sat bolt upright, the dueling pistol glinting on her knees. She must be made of iron to sit like that so long. Philip Parramore moved uneasily to the farthest corner of the room. There was a sofa and he drooped on the hard cushion. He stared straight ahead, looking at no one.

Slowly the others sat down. Mrs. Virginius Kirby returned to staring out the window. Granny and Aunt Abbie dozed. No one spoke. Mildred alone could not be still. She paced up and down the room, her steps the only sound. At times she was aware of Elizabeth watching her. Mostly she thought only of Brose.

The night passed. Everyone was asleep except Mildred and Elizabeth. Occasionally Mrs. Virginius Kirby started awake and peered out of the window. At midnight John came in with some peanut coffee. They all bestirred themselves. While they were drinking the hot liquid, thin and bitter, St. George Paxton came. He looked like someone who had lived beyond all ages of mortal man. His skin was like old white paper.

"No, thank you." He gestured the coffee away. "I've only a moment, I've got to get home, but I wanted to tell you-all that everything is all right. The raiders have been driven off."

There was a moment's silence. Then all their voices rose at once.

"I think they're all safe," St. George said. "There were a few wounded, not badly, and only one killed — Captain Ellery."

"Lord," Uncle Virginius sighed, "from the Department."

"Yes. Henly's Departmental Battalion fought under Captain McAnerny. They all behaved well and especially, I heard, Captain Leatherbury's boys' company . . . the one Sheppard was with, and Brose. It was their fire, they say, that broke the enemy's cavalry on the Westham Plank Road."

Brose and Dennis fighting together. . . .

"How about my husband's reserve company?" Mrs. Kirby asked.

"They came through without a scratch, I think. They're back in town already, being mustered out, and I did n't hear of any casualties. The Yankees were close enough, though, only four miles out."

Elizabeth ran up and hugged her mother and buried her face in her shoulder. Mrs. Kirby's expression did not change.

"I heard the firing at dusk," Mildred said. She was picturing Brose there, with the boys, a big gun kicking in his fist.

"That was the boys. Waller's Quartermaster Battalion and the mechanics from the armory and ordnance were there too, but the boys are the heroes. They've come back to town too, I believe."

Uncle Virginius suddenly forgot his pride in his son. "How about the attack north of the city, Saint?"

"They're still fighting out there, at the Meadow Bridges, near Mechanicsville, but I think they're being driven back. They were inside our fortifications, within two miles of us, but I reckon there's no more danger from them either, because they're not sending the men who came back from the Westham Plank Road out there."

"How did they get so close?"

"That's the horrible part of it. A spy in Richmond notified the Unions of the precise time when we would be denuded of defense. He was to help them release the prisoners and turn them on us. . . . By the way, Mrs. Kirby, he was once your husband's clerk. Man name of Parramore."

No one spoke. Their eyes sought one another's. Simultaneously, they all turned toward the sofa.

So still he might have been holding his breath, Philip Parramore huddled in the corner and stared at them with guilty panic in his eyes. His face had become clammy, almost green, and his starched linen lay like a wet cloth above his collar.

"Gad," St. George muttered. "What on earth —"

"He came here to seek protection from Charles." Mrs. Kirby was cold and hard, like Brose when he was angry. "He told us some cock-and-bull story about being innocent and suspected because of his pretty clothes."

"We've been watching him for months! We knew for certain this afternoon and have been looking for him ever since."

Philip Parramore pushed himself to his feet. Mildred could see him trembling as he tried to speak. Dry words trickled out of his mouth. "It's all a terrible mistake, like I told you. I can prove my innocence."

"You'll be given a chance to do that," St. George said, "one that you did n't give us."

"No . . . no . . . they won't give me a chance. They're too excited now. They'll hang me, I know. I'll have to go somewhere and hide until the excitement blows over. . . ." He was backing against the wall, nearer the door.

"You're not going anywhere until the men come." Mrs. Kirby's arm came up straight, outstretched, with the pistol at the end shining in the light. "You wanted to see the men, and you're going to."

"For God's sake, you don't understand. They've just come back from fighting. They won't listen to reason. Let me get out of here." He inched along the wall. His hand reached out to the doorjamb.

"If you take one more step, I'll shoot you."

Mildred felt her spine tingle at the woman's tone. Parramore crouched, glaring, clinging to the doorjamb with one hand. He kept wetting his lips. The sweat on his face shone like grease. His finely tailored tunic was black beneath the arms. In the room there was no sound except his heavy breathing. Outside, steps sounded faintly on the flagstones in the yard.

"That's them now," Parramore cried. "You've got to let me out of here. You've got to! I'll leave the city. I'll never bother a one of you again, I swear before Christ I won't." He bunched himself to spring. The steps echoed harshly on the iron steps of the balcony. "You can't let me hang. You would n't shoot."

"I will. Don't move."

"You couldn't. You could n't!" A knock on the door rang through the house. "Oh . . ." He gasped in a sigh, threw back his head, and gave them one despairing look. Then he bolted. A

roar deafened Mildred and she felt as though she had been struck. Right in front of her eyes the air was full of widening blue circles. They vanished into a mist of smoke. Powder stung her nostrils.

When her eyes cleared from the shock, Philip Parramore was standing, still and erect, facing them. He had an expression of surprised dismay, and something of the incredulous hurt of a child. He opened his lips and Mildred saw they were white. His legs buckled. He tried to raise his hand. Terror and incredulity played in swift conflict across his face. Then he pitched forward. After he struck the floor, he never moved. The back of his fine tunic was torn where the ball had gone through.

The front door crashed in. Brose stumbled into the doorway, braced himself on widespread legs. He looked at the gun in his mother's hand. Everyone started to scream and talk at once. Mildred glimpsed a flash of hoops and petticoats on the floor. Somebody was weeping in a hysterical monotone. Hundreds of people seemed to be rushing around her. Hands were on her.

"What is it? What is it?" Brose sounded excited. It was the first time she had ever heard tension in his voice. She felt his arms close around her. "Mildred . . ."

She saw his face near hers and suddenly everything in the room was as clear as though it were etched.

"Oh, Brose . . . Brose . . ." The past two months that she had thought were forgotten surged in her and broke. "Our wedding night . . ."

For days after, the family talked of nothing except the night of the cavalry raids. They talked of that man Parramore, who had sat right over yonder on the green sofa when he had plotted to have them murdered in their beds; they described to one another again and again how Judy Kirby, as cool as any man, had fired just as if it were target practice; they condemned the wickedness of Yankees who snatched Brose from his bride, Charles Kirby from his family, and young Sheppard Kirby from his parents; they scorned Kilpatrick,

who led the Union attack on the north, and who fled, panic-stricken, before a few troops of regular Rebel cavalry; but of all they most reviled Dahlgren, who came to burn the city and murder the President, who showed his true colors by breaking before those boys, and who got his just deserts when he was chased and killed, his command captured, loaded down with loot they had stolen from houses on the way; and over and over they discussed the dreadful consequences that might have happened if Dahlgren had been able to execute the horrible orders found on his body: to burn the city, murder the Cabinet, and rouse the slaves.

Their words rolled over Mildred in a grim undertone to her thoughts. All she remembered of Dahlgren's raid was that for the first time the war had come between her and Brose. But in April, when the soldiers started moving up from the south to join Lee, her family's words no longer droned over her. Now they did not worry her as some dead event. They struck close. For in April she felt the other life in her body begin to stir. Every movement of that other life made their talk harder to bear, because Brose was coming north too, as an officer, for the coming "On to Richmond" campaign.

The three women talked of the new general, Grant, who had won so many victories in the West, and who fought without regard for human life; of "Retreating Joe" Johnston and the Yankee Sherman who was in Georgia trying to divide the Confederacy; of the sieges of Charleston and Wilmington, their last open port, and of Beast Butler moving up the Peninsula to strike Richmond from the east. In the same tone, they discussed the rising prices: no James River shad at twenty dollars a piece; no meal for cornbread with that selling at eighty dollars a bushel; no more bacon at ten dollars a pound. They talked of planting lettuce and cabbage in the garden, of poor Dennis Leatherbury being wounded again, of how sad Baylor Warwick looked hobbling on his wooden leg. . . .

Mildred knew she would have to tell them about the child to quiet them. They were in the upstairs sitting room watching a regiment of ragged soldiers march down Franklin Street. Warm April air

drifted in the open windows. The men in the regiment felt the spring, for they yelled at the ladies in the windows and waved their floppy hats. It was sad to hear them, for there was not much cheering on the streets now, as there had been three years ago, when the uniforms were new and the bands played.

Her mother turned from the window, an old lady's frown on her face. "I can't help it; I think it's a shame to send those poor men back into battle again, against such odds."

All the words that Mildred had planned were scattered. "How can you talk like that, as though we won't win? I thought you hated the Yankees."

The three women stared at her in amazement. She realized how intense she must have sounded, for the words had come gushing out of her long-stifled emotions. Cousin Flora collected herself first.

"Why, child," she said soothingly, "you know we do hate them, but we must face the fact that they're growing stronger all the time, and we just can't replace our poor men."

"And the best blood in Virginia that can never be replaced . . ." Aunt Abbie saw beyond them into an old life of her own.

"As long as we have men like General Lee and Jeb Stuart and Brose, we have n't lost the best blood in Virginia."

"Mildred," her mother said petulantly, "I should think you'd be more anxious for peace than any of us, with your husband in the army."

"I am anxious for peace. Do you think I have a moment during the day free of the fear that I'll never see him again? I carry it with me all the time."

"Then, child," Cousin Flora interrupted in her matter-of-factness, "I don't understand why you don't want peace just as we do."

"I do want peace! Dear God, what do you think I am? But I don't want peace by surrender. I could n't stand it if he were defeated. Don't you understand that . . . any of you?" She looked from one face to the other, meeting only bewilderment and concern. "Maybe you'll understand," the words came pelting out, "if I tell you I'm going to have a baby in five months."

CHAPTER XXVI

"Go back, go back and do your duty as I have done mine, and our country will be saved. Go back! I'd rather die than be whipped." — *General J. E. B. Stuart after he was wounded in the cavalry engagement against Sheridan's raiders, at Yellow Tavern, six miles north of Richmond, May 11, 1864*

All day the bell in the Capitol Square tower had pealed the tocsin. Whenever the cap machine stopped, Elizabeth could hear distant guns, like thunder rumbling down the river. The girl who worked next to her on varnishing the caps was very scared. She said those guns were on the south side of the river and Beast Butler had an army there attacking Drewry's Bluff from the land. "You know what happened when he was in New Orleans," she kept saying.

One of the boys across from her, who filled caps, said the Yankees were attacking north of the city too. He knew because his father was in the Departmental Battalion, and they had been shifted during the night from the south side up to the Meadow Bridges. His father had stopped at home for some food. "He was nigh starved," the boy said, "and black as a nigger."

The old man at the head of the machine, stamping the copper strips, said they should n't worry. General Lee had nearly annihilated Grant at the Wilderness and was fighting him again now. "This Grant is no better than all the other generals they've tried," he said. "He was some punkins in the West, but he's fighting Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia now. Mark my word, they're making all this to-do around Richmond to scare us, so we'll draw more men away from Lee. Grant's only got two to one odds now, and he knows that ain't enough. Don't you worry."

The tocsin rang again. It sounded desperate, pleading. Outside somebody yelled, and then shouting started up across the canal. The guns boomed heavier down the river and Elizabeth heard them faintly over the machine. The girl next to her started to cry.

"I don't blame you none, gal," said the gaunt, sallow-faced young man who worked on the copper stamping with Old Man Burch. "Old Lafe, heah, he don't worry none 'cause he don't have to git out 'n' fit with the Arsenal Battalion. He figguhs he just goin' on stampin' copper. Well, old man, theah ain't go' be no copper soon. We ain't ever go' git back them copper mines around Chattanooga, 'n' these moonshine stills we're usin' ain't go' last forever. What you go' do then, huh?"

"I'm not here because of my years but because I'm a machinist," the old man replied, "and not to avoid fighting, like you, you pinch-bottle-faced, chicken-breasted rascal."

"Heh-heh, listen to the old rooster. You ain't dead yet, Lafe. You —"

"Stop the machines!" The horse-faced ordnance captain stood in the doorway. "All the men in the battalion fall in immediately. The rest of you close shop and get to your homes."

The girl beside Elizabeth started to wail. Elizabeth felt the familiar fear creeping through her like an ague. She had held it down all the long winter months in the arsenal, held it down those first weeks when she ached and cried with weariness, held it down during the spring months when the raids struck closer and closer, when her own father marched out; even to-day, by shutting tight her mind and watching nothing but the copper strips and the filled caps she varnished, she had held it down.

But there was something tense, different, in the way the ordnance officer stood in the doorway and would n't answer the questions that the rising voices hurled at him. *What is it? . . . Has the city fallen? . . .* His cold competent eyes were narrower than usual. *Has General Lee been beaten? . . . Is Richmond going to surrender? . . .* Many times he had ordered the men of the Arsenal Battalion to join the other local-defense troops, but never had he

closed the shops entirely, never refused to answer their questions. *Butler's taken Drewry's Bluff. . . . They're coming in on us. . . .* Panic screamed louder in the bedlam of voices and Elizabeth felt it shriek in her. She jumped up from the table. *Oh, Jesus, save us. . . . Let me get outa heah. . . .*

"Stop it!" The officer yelled at them. His face was a mottled red. "Richmond has n't fallen and General Lee has n't been defeated and Butler has n't taken Drewry's Bluff. But Sheridan's cavalry is north of the city and we need every man out there. Those of you not in the battalion get some new rifles from the armory. You women go home where you'll be safe in case — in case some of the raiders get in the city or shells fall. But, for God's sake, don't act like a bunch of sheep. Close the shop and —"

His words were swallowed in the rush. The women and boys had been edging toward him, forming in a ragged blot around the doorway. Then they rushed. He was swept outside with them. The stamp machines were abandoned. Caps were strewn all over the tables and floor. Elizabeth was in there with Old Man Burch and the men of the battalion.

"Well, old man, heah's yoh chance to do some fittin' too. He said everybody what ain't in the battalion git new rifles from the armory."

Old Man Burch did n't say anything. His skin was as white as his beard. His pale blue eyes stared straight ahead, but they did n't seem to see anything. He walked stiffly out the door. *God damn, it's sho a shame make an old man like that fight. . . .* The sallow-faced young man hurried across the floor after him. The last of the men were leaving the cluttered room. Elizabeth forced herself forward, sobbing for strength. *Gawd, how can we keep goin' out to fit, 'n' still make the munitions 'n' ordnance what the awmy needs? . . . Keep callin' us and theah ain't goin' to be nothin' foh to fit with. . . .* Into the bright May sunshine she saw the men pouring out of the frame buildings of the laboratories on the island. The women were already crossing the bridge to the foot of Seventh Street. *Yoh pappy out with the Locals already, ain't he, Miss*

Kirby? She nodded, grabbed the handrail of the bridge. The guns, louder and heavier from the land side of Drewry's Bluff, snarled an undertone to the shouting and the cursing. *What in hell's the use of defendin' the damned city anyway? . . . Copper gone, nitre gone, only lead we got left for the whole — country's in Wytheville. . . . You shut that dirty mouth or you'll be gone, yessuh, right down theah in that river. . . .* The rushing water from the spur of the river boiled under her and then she staggered on the cut-up ground of the shore. Men swarmed around her. The women workers were swallowed up. The noise was deafening.

The doors to the forges hung open and half-finished gun carriages drooped where the men had left them, the iron still hot. Timber that Brose and the other soldiers from the army had cut during the winter lay scattered where the men had been making it into charcoal for the forges. Wavering spires of black smoke were all that moved in there now.

In front of the old red brick tobacco warehouse where the heavy cannon were made, newly finished, unmounted twelve-pounders lay on the platform. They were some of the new banded guns, made since the copper mines were lost. Not a thing moved there. Voices clamored at her from the churning dust ahead. *Dammit, we make all the cannons for the country, 'n' if they keep callin' us out theah ain't go' be none. . . . They oughta make all the politicians fit . . . they got us into it. . . . Brother, we got to git ourselves out. . . . Aayay . . . com-pan-yay . . . fall in. . . .*

Elizabeth saw the solid lines of men forming on her right. Sun glinted through the smoke on their rifles. Unsteadily she crossed to the other side of the unpaved street. Doors to all the old tobacco warehouses gaped open and all the work the men had been doing lay scattered and unfinished. She saw the tables of pistols, stacks of friction primers, boxes of cartridges, a case of cotton halters, unpainted caissons, drying hides the soldiers had cut off dead horses and mules and the wooden saddletrees the hides were going on. *Bat-tal-li-yon . . . right by squad . . . hawoh. . . .*

The cross street opened beside her. People were rushing through

it toward Sixth. Elizabeth followed them through the thinning dust. The Arsenal Battalion, five hundred and fifty, they said, marched on up Seventh, their shoes shuffling in the dusty street, the officers' voices bawling, the guns rumbling down the river, and the tocsin pealing again, wildly.

When she reached the Sixth Street she saw that most of those rushing ahead of her were down at the armory. On the river side, old men and young boys crowded toward the arched doorway in the centre of the wide, stone, barred old building. Ordnance officers, in charge of the manufacture of rifles there, were passing them out. The shrill, high voices of the boys made her want to cry. They were younger than the fourteen- to seventeen-year-olds in the boys' company of Major Leatherbury's battalion, and from the way those old men bobbed along, stooped and gray, she judged they were older than the men in her father's company.

The old men and boys swarmed from the armory across the bridge over the canal, hurrying after the Armory Battalion of four hundred. Dust rose from below the armory and she saw the smaller battalion of the Tredegar Iron Works, swinging across the broken, open land in platoon front. The officer at the head of the three companies must be Brigadier General Anderson, who had resigned from the regular army to run the Tredegar. Gray smoke still drifted from the chimneys, moved by the warm wind, like mist, toward the ramparts of Gamble's Hill. The thunder of the guns deepened from the river. She hurried.

She crossed the canal and turned up Byrd Street to Fifth, and up Fifth. Samson and Poe's Foundry was shuttered. The street was deserted. Ahead, above the houses and the buildings, a dim shouting rose and fell. Nearer and then farther away, singing and then groaning, dispersed and then gathered, the sound of the city wailing coursed down her spine and sent her almost running up the hill.

Main Street was transformed. Gone were the civilians and the women who crowded it when she passed it on her way to and from work, gone as though they had never been there. Old men and

young boys pushed up the hill, cutting off into the side streets, old men and young boys carrying new armory rifles and old flintlocks, army muskets and shotguns, old swords from family walls, and dueling pistols. Wounded soldiers limped and some swayed with a sling-held arm. A battery crashed over the cobblestones, weather-black drivers laying the whip over bony horses, and dust-gray men clinging to the iron rails on caisson boxes. The rumble of the gun carriages and the clatter of the hoofs receded. The wail rose again. Now, above the wail as the gun thunder growled under it, rose a sharp high crackle from straight ahead. *Sheridan's cavalry is attacking from the north. . . .*

She ran around the corner of Fourth Street. The falling sun threw long shadows of the poplars across the sidewalk. Tulips and lilacs bloomed in Lawyer Tazewell's garden. Nothing could happen to this street. Fourth Street had been like this since she had played here as a little girl. How could this cavalry have gotten so close? Where was Chester's Jeb Stuart? *Where was Chester? . . .*

She ran up the short wooden steps, across the porch to the door. The hall was cool and fresh from the airing of the house to the May breeze. Her mother started up from her chair in the sitting room as Elizabeth flung open the door.

"What on earth is it?" Mrs. Kirby's face was drawn tight and dark. There was no fear in those bitter eyes.

"Don't you hear the guns?"

Her mother nodded. "We've heard guns before."

"But the rifles— Oh, it's awful, that rattle!"

"I have n't heard any rattling."

"You can't, in the house. But that's where Papa is. Out north of the city. It's a cavalry attack there, that horrible Sheridan, the one who burns . . ."

She saw the color leave her mother's face. There was no other sign, except that her mouth curved down at the corners. "You sit down and collect yourself. Don't disturb Granny. She's asleep."

Elizabeth looked around the familiar room. How could she sit down in here? On the table were the neat piles of rosin and red pepper that her father had been working on as a cure for diarrhea. She felt the trembling take hold of her, the tears welling. All at once she dropped into the chair where she used to sit and released the pressing sobs. She had never felt anything like it. It seemed that the sobs must wrench her body. It seemed that the weeping would never stop. Marie came in.

"Miss Judy, why don' you do sumpen for that chile, lettin' her cry her heart out like that?"

"Marie, you take that rosin that Mister Charles left there and make some soap."

"He need that foh the poh soljuhs."

"Never mind about the poh soldiers. If Richmond is going to fall, I'll at least be clean once more before the Yankees take it over."

"Richmond go' fall! How come? Ain't Mistuh Brose up theah fittin' with Gen'al Lee?"

"Yes, he's fighting right now, but they have two other armies outside the city. You dissolve that lye in the kitchen and boil some fat in it. When it's all liquid, put in this rosin."

"Miss Judy, foh Gawd —"

"Did you hear me, Marie?"

Elizabeth heard Marie back out of the room, after gathering up the rosin. The cold steadiness of her mother's voice seemed to stop the sobs. She wiped her eyes. The sun had dropped and the first shadows were inching into the room. Her mother was still standing in the middle of the floor. Elizabeth looked at her and suddenly she thought: *I can be like Mother as much as Brose can.*

"I—I'm sorry, Mother, I broke down."

Her mother's eyes opened wider and her head cocked to one side. "There's someone at the door."

Elizabeth tried to rise.

"Stay there," Mrs. Kirby said in a flat, harsh voice. "I'll go."

Elizabeth made herself get up out of the chair as her mother left the room. She heard the voices in the hall and she tried to curve down her mouth. She remembered the dark heat in Brose's eyes and narrowed her own. The door opened and Chester stood there. Black streaks lined his chalky face. Fever burned in the shadowed depths of his eyes. The red-clay dust coating his torn jacket was deeper red inside the sleeve and on the right side. The blood was dry. Then the words tore out of her throat. "*You're wounded!*"

"No . . . no . . ." His voice was almost gone. "It's the General . . . General Stuart . . ."

"Oh, my God!" It was her mother, standing stiff in the doorway. "Badly?"

Chester nodded. "In the stomach. We brought him in to his brother-in-law's . . . up Grace Street a little ways. It—it's his blood on me. I helped carry him." His smoke-blackened lips tightened against his breaking voice.

All the sound, all the movement in her, was paralyzed. She saw her mother push a chair behind Chester. "Sit down, Chester. We'll get some tea."

"No'm, I can't. It's Sheridan—he's inside the outer fortifications. Our lines are broken. I must go back . . ."

"You can't go back till you've eaten something." Mrs. Kirby took him by the shoulders. He stiffened against her. She pulled him backward. She was a strong woman, country-bred. He fell into the chair like a child. He tried to speak, but Mrs. Kirby called Marie.

"You'll kill yourself," she said to him. "If they're going to get in the city, you won't stop them." Marie looked in the door. Her eyes rolled like a scared horse's. "Fix Mister Chester some of your best coffee and —"

"That ole 'tato stuff ain't fitten —"

"It's better than he gets in camp, and get him something to eat, too—anything you can find."

"Mrs. Kirby, I —" Chester leaned forward and braced his hands

on the seat of the chair. Elizabeth fell toward him, on her knees beside the chair, her arms, desperately strong, pulling him back. "No, Chester, no. You stay here. You must n't go. You can't go. If Richmond falls you can't stop it by yourself, like Mother says. You stay here with us."

The black-streaked face turned to her. "In a big field . . . he was rallying the men . . . some Yankee running back turned and shot him. They nearly captured the ambulance we had him in. We had to fight them off him. He never lost a field before. Never was defeated. At Brandy Station they pushed us back. But he never lost the field."

"You rest now, Chester," her mother said.

"Do you hear any firing?"

Elizabeth grew silent inside. She was n't breathing. Outside, in the distance, there was a faint shouting. They could n't hear any rattle. Even the river thunder had rolled away. The room was growing dark.

"They must n't be in the city then," he said. His body relaxed and his head fell back. "The Locals were there at the second line. I've never seen such old men. Oh, the shame of it, that those old men and boys should have to help Stuart's cavalry . . ."

She stroked his head. It was blazing hot. "Please, Chester, don't think of it any more. After all, you saved the city."

"But we broke. They were too many for us —"

"But you've been outnumbered before."

"Not like this! They overwhelmed us. Our horses were worn-out — and theirs were so sleek and fat. And carbines!" His voice cracked again. "They've got breech-loading carbines against our old muzzle-loading —"

"You rest." She stroked his head in a gentle flowing motion.

Marie came in with a cup of steaming coffee. Mrs. Kirby passed it to him. He looked at it.

"It's sweetened, honey," Marie said. "Got sorghum in it."

They all watched him sip it. He took a deep breath and then started drinking. Marie grinned and hurried out. She came back

with a stale piece of sorghum pie made of molasses and flour and mixed with walnut meats. Chester wolfed it.

"First food I've had to-day. We started at three this morning." His voice was a little stronger, more natural, and the chalkiness left his skin. "I wonder where the men are. I should've gone back, but I . . ."

"You should've come here. I'm glad you did."

He drained the coffee cup. "I must get back to the house and see how he is . . ."

"I'll go with you." She grabbed up her hat from the table where she had dropped it.

"Let me know if — if anything happens," Judy Kirby said.

They went out silently. The street was blue-dark and the lamps glowed through the late dusk mist. She started and clung harder to his arm when they heard a low fitful rattle. She felt him stiffen.

"They're still at it, against those old men. Oh, the brave Sheridan, the gallant foe —"

"Sh-h," she whispered. They walked on in silence. A light drizzle began to fall. They hardly noticed it. Farther up Grace Street there was a dark knot on the sidewalk. They stood outside the brick wall of the house. Yellow roses glowed dimly in the street light. It was dark now.

A huge man came out of the house. His wide moustaches curled out from the sides of his face. Elizabeth saw immense cavalry boots rolled below his knees. He walked slowly, his head bowed. The crowd gave way for him. Chester touched him. Chester was above middle height, but this man, even bent, towered above him. He looked down at Chester with the saddest eyes Elizabeth ever saw.

"How is he, Von?" Chester asked softly.

"The General iss — iss ver-ry bad, man — he . . ." The heavy voice broke, and the great shoulders shook. He put his gauntleted hand on Chester's arm. "For him I am afraid . . ." He coughed dryly, pointed to his throat, and shook his head. Tears ran down his cheeks. He made a deep bow to Elizabeth and moved off down the street.

"Who is that, Chester?"

He did n't answer for a moment. Then his voice sounded muffled. "Major von Borcke. He's a Prussian, the General's chief of staff. He's wounded too, in the throat."

They stood there with the silent crowd. The drizzle fell. The only sound was an occasional sigh. The low light burned on in the front of the house. Officers entered the door and came out, heads low. A tall thin man moved through the crowd, his stovepipe hat glinting above them. *President Davis*. . . . The crowd rustled. In a little while he came out. He looked at the ground. The reflection of light etched deep the lines in his pale, sick face. He moved silently through the crowd. More officers came. A troop of cavalry passed, their horses walking. The men slouched like sacks on them. The horses' heads drooped. Some men in shirt sleeves pulled a broken gun carriage past. Soldiers limped up, murmured a question, faded off into the darkness. The drizzle thickened. There was no firing any more. From the house there came no sound. At twelve o'clock Chester said they should go.

Walking home, she was very tired. Her mother was waiting up for her. She asked Chester to spend the night, but he said he had to go back. He would come to-morrow. In the hallway, Elizabeth stood clinging to his hands. His head dropped forward and his lips stayed a long time on her hair. Then his hands eased free, he touched her shaking shoulders and held them steady. He turned without a word. She heard his spurs tinkle as he went down the stairs. Her mother came out and lowered the light to a sickly glow. "We'll keep it on all night."

They went upstairs together. "Mother," she said, "may I sleep with you to-night?"

Her mother nodded. On the foot of the bed was her father's coat, where he had flung it in his hurry to change into the uniform. Usually he was so neat. On the mantel was a tintype of her mother and father when they were married. They had been young, too, like her and Chester. They looked so happy and trustful staring out, and her father looked so kind. She got her

clothes off, fumblingly, and crawled into the bed. She and Brose and Paul had been born in it. It gave her a curious feeling as she fell asleep.

Next morning she was awakened by a harsh rattle. She started up. Her mother was at the window, looking out. At first a peal of thunder sounded, as though the guns were in the city. When she reached the window she saw that it was raining, hard, and thunder rolled from the black clouds. When the thunder stopped, she heard the rumble down the river. It was different from thunder when you heard them together. The cannon were sharper, like a blast. But through both thunders the dry crackle sounded thin and high, farther to the east than yesterday, and much clearer.

Her mother told her not to go to the arsenal to-day. There would n't be any men to work the machines, she said, and better, anyway, that she stay at home. For breakfast they ate cornbread with bacon drippings on it. Elizabeth had n't tasted butter for so long she did n't miss it. But the coffee was still very bitter without milk. Granny came down later and sat in her rocker. They waited.

Chester did n't come. The rain lashed outside and the wind flattened the flowers behind the Grace Street houses. The rumbling guns down the river were nearer than yesterday. The crackle was so steady they got used to it, like the rain, and the guns were just like more thunder. None of them said anything about it, but each alone during the day straightened out her clothes and hid pieces of jewelry and mementos. Marie came in and said she had buried the silver in the woodshed. "Even the Yankees would n't bother with what's left of that," Granny said.

Late in the afternoon Uncle Virginus came to see if they were all right. When her mother asked him about Charles it was the first time she had spoken his name.

"I don't know, Judy," Uncle Virginus said. The worry lay naked on his face. "The Locals are still fighting Sheridan. He's moved crosswise in front of the second line of fortifications without

attacking it. Some more of Stuart's cavalry are coming at him from behind."

"How is General Stuart?"

He looked down at the floor. "Sinking." Elizabeth could n't look at any of them. Then he said with forced heartiness: "General Lee's holding Grant at Spotsylvania though, in spite of all the men Lee's had to send here; and the handful at Drewry's Bluff are still holding out against Butler's army after their lines broke yesterday." It had a hollow sound.

"Bad times. Worse coming," Granny droned.

Uncle Virginius gave her a baleful look. His brief, false cheerfulness fell from him. His cracking voice rose high. "You're right about that at last, Granny. Butler's cut the Richmond and Danville railroad, which breaks our line of supplies from the south, and Sigel is taking up the destruction of the Valley where Sheridan left off—"

"That's all right, Virginius," Mrs. Kirby said quietly. "We'll hold out somehow. If only there were some word of Charles . . ."

"That you have n't indicates the best, Judy. None of the Departmental Battalion is back either."

In the heavy silence that followed, Uncle Virginius left. They waited. Toward dusk the crackle died away and the guns down the river grew silent.

"You-all can sit here and moon if you want," Granny said, "but I'm goin' to have some supper. Did you know we ain't had a mouthful since breakfast?"

Elizabeth was n't hungry, but she felt weak. The warmed-over cabbage was tasteless, the "Benjamin" hardtack soaked in hot water was heavy, and the pot likker was strained thin, and salty. Back in the sitting room they lit one of the last of the homemade candles and huddled around its feeble, wavering glow. The rain lashed at the house and splashed in the puddles, as though it had always rained and would never stop. A heavy body of cavalry clattered down Grace Street. Later a gun battery rumbled by. It was night.

When the knock sounded, even Granny started up. Elizabeth hurried to the door, but Marie was already waddling down the hall. She stood there in the darkness and watched the front door open. Chester stood, black against the rain, as stiff as a statue. He walked straight down the hall as if he did n't see her.

"Chester," she said hesitantly. He paused there in the doorway. Marie came back and hovered behind him. His face was a blur that did n't move. In the silence she heard the water dripping off his clothes. "Come on in, Chester," she said shakily.

With that same stiffness he walked into the room. Marie squeezed in as Elizabeth closed the door and went toward him. She stopped short. He stood in the middle of the room, his shoulders squared in the rain-blackened, dripping jacket, his stubbled chin jutted out, and his eyes, gray and glassy, staring straight ahead. His voice came in a dead monotone.

"General Stuart is dead."

General Stuart is dead . . . a yellow sash around his waist . . . If you want to have a good time jine the cavalry . . . General Stuart is dead . . . a plume waving in his hat . . . General J. E. B. Stuart . . . That's the General . . . a laugh in his brown beard . . . If you want to have a good time . . . Jeb Stuart rode around McClellan . . . Jeb Stuart raided into Pennsylvania . . . Jine the cavalry . . . General Stuart is dead. . . .

She heard a strangling sob and looked at Chester. He collapsed in a chair, his wet clothes soaking the faded cushions. His face fell forward, all twisted and working, and tears ran down his cheeks. His shoulders, with the jacket plastered to them, heaved forward and back. Then he started to cry like a child.

They had been held in a vise, but when he started crying they all ran to him and started talking at once. Elizabeth did n't know what she was saying, or what the others were. It was all a babble and his voice broke through his weeping.

"It can't be . . . it can't be . . . he can't be dead. . . ." Over and over he said that. That was all she remembered of all the words that poured out in the dimly lit room with the rain lashing

outside. "He can't die . . . he could n't be killed. . . ." Marie ran to get some water. "Just yesterday I talked to him. The sun was shining on his sash and he waved his sword like he always did. . . . He can't be dead . . . God could n't do that to us. . . ." Marie came back with a cloth soaked in the water and she started to bathe his face. Slowly the tears stopped. The crying died off into long sobs. Then he put his hands over his face and his muffled voice came steadier. "I don't know what we'll do without him."

"Chester darling," Elizabeth murmured, "remember when Stonewall Jackson died, you said that other officers had been trained to take his place. Not as good as General Jackson, but more of them —"

"They're all going too, all going."

"Others will come, darling."

"Not in the cavalry. First it was Pelham, then Farley; then Rooney Lee was wounded and captured; then von Borcke wounded and now . . . now . . ."

"No, no, Chester. You said yourself the soldiers themselves were better trained now and —"

"It'll never be the same without him. Something's gone from the army. I—I can't believe I'll never see him again. I can't believe we'll go on and he won't be there."

"Chester." Her mother's voice was coldly calm. "We have to learn to go on, no matter who's not there. I don't know if I'll see my husband again. I don't know from day to day if I'll see my sons again. I have to go on."

He looked up quickly, his gray eyes turned almost beseechingly to Judy Kirby.

"Yes. Yes, we do have to go on . . . somehow."

"We've got to go on till we win."

His gaze faltered then. It was a moment before he spoke. "Sheridan's been driven off. He's crossed the Chickahominy and gone east. And General Lee has defeated Grant again — at Spotsylvania." Then his eyes dropped and his voice was thick. "But

we can't replace our men. They 're going fast, our best men. . . ."

"You 're unnerved," Mrs. Kirby said steadily. "As long as there is one man left in Virginia, we have n't lost."

"No, ma'am," he said, very low. "But it won't be the same without him."

CHAPTER XXVII

"SOLDIERS OF VIRGINIA: Born of an inheritance of freedom you cannot choose between freedom and death . . . but were we base enough to desire peace upon any terms less than an unqualified recognition of our independence, self-interest alone would teach us the folly of reliance upon the forbearance of a nation who have shown . . . that their faith is in perfidy, and their only policy is rapine, plunder and oppression. . . . An army of veterans have resolved that their country shall not be enslaved."—*Resolution adopted by the General Assembly of Virginia, 1864*

Mildred was curiously happy to see Dennis and she knew it was not only because of the heavy firing northeast of the city that rattled the windows and frightened the three women in the house. He had changed from the man who had given her such torments because of Brose. A close-cropped brown beard softened him and he had a dignity in place of his old blundering strength. The loss of that strength, which had gone with his right arm, had matured and mellowed him since he had ceased coming to her house. Above the beard his clear blue eyes, with none of their former pugnacity, were almost gentle.

"This battle going on," he said, smiling naturally, "really gave me my excuse for coming by. I've wanted to ever since I met your husband during the short fight of Dahlgren's raid. While I was wounded, I thought of it a good deal. But it was hard after my foolishness . . . disappearing in high dudgeon because you showed you loved — Lieutenant Kirby."

She studied him a moment. "I'm glad you came, Dennis. We were sorry to hear about your new wound."

"That did n't amount to much. I'll be fit again in a couple of weeks. But I wish it had n't kept me out of this action to-day."

"I know Mother will be glad it did. You can comfort her. She thinks that's all of Grant's army out there fighting to get into Richmond."

"It is," he said soberly.

"What?" She sat up straight on the sofa. A pain clutched her stomach, contracting her whole body.

"What is it?" Dennis slid forward to the edge of his chair.

She shook her head and waved him back. She eased down on the sofa, pressing against her fear. "Just the shock of . . . knowing they're so near. . . . How near?" The pain did not abate.

"About six miles, near the old Cold Harbor battlefield. . . . But, Mildred, you're as white as a sheet."

She got a good breath. "It's this heat."

"Yes, it's frightfully hot to-day, as hot as I've ever seen it in early June. The mugginess makes it worse, too." He frowned a little, plainly uneasy. "Let me get you a fan."

"No, no . . ." It was hard to get a breath again. "I don't understand . . . Grant being so near . . . when Lee . . . when Lee beats him all the time."

"Grant keeps sidling around Lee's right flank, trying to find a vulnerable spot. He'll never do it, though. He's not fighting Bragg out West now. He's fighting Lee's Army of Northern Virginia."

She nodded. "But so close . . . and everyone says he's such a butcher . . ."

"That's true enough. They say he's already lost nearly as many men as we have in the army. But it's not getting him anywhere. Being out there at Cold Harbor does n't indicate anything. McClellan got closer than that two years ago by only fighting one rear-guard action. Don't worry about it." He tried to smile reassuringly.

"I reckon it's because . . . it's so loud. . . . I've never heard anything like it." The thunder of the guns, shaking the floor, seemed to shake the child within her into startled life. The pain

constricted her again and she clenched her hands to keep down a sound.

"Mildred!" He came up out of the chair. "I must get you a fan or something. You're so pale."

"All . . . right . . ." The heat was smothering her and the fear rising, overflowing onto the edges of her brain. It could n't be the child. It was three months before that. The pain must leave soon.

Dennis came back with a palm-leaf fan. He drew his chair closer and fanned her in great gusts. The warm breeze felt good. She eased her body again. If only the windowpanes would stop rattling. . . .

"There," he said firmly, "you look a little better now." Beads of sweat were strung across his brows and rivulets trickled into his beard. "I reckon you're worried about your husband out there. I can tell you he's behind excellent breastworks. There's no general in the world who can fortify like Lee. . . . I wish I was out there."

Behind breastworks . . . no! She could n't think of Brose out there, not now. "I hear you're a major, Dennis."

His bright smile returned. "Yes, they've given me a company of old men to go with my boys and I have a battalion. Lieutenant Kirby's father is in my old man's company. I have n't gotten to know him yet. He's a very quiet man — seems sad."

"He's sweet," she said. The pain contracted her again, a turning knife. A gust of musketry rattled through the house and the fear, which she had been holding down, broke and shook her as the floor was shaking. What was this pain?

Dennis had n't noticed. He was thinking of his battalion. "My boys and old men are guarding the camps and prisons, you know. Every able-bodied soldier is fighting. . . . My old Richmond Blues are surely doing themselves proud with Beauregard. They've got Beast Butler so bottled up at Bermuda Hundred that at least we don't have anything to fear from south of the river. . . . Mildred! Something is the matter."

She shook her head. She could n't tell anyone now. It was hardly over three months since they had been married. She forced out

words. "It's this firing. . . . I've never known a battle was anything like this. . . . How can they live?"

Dennis hovered over her, his eyes clouded with worry. "This is heavy firing. It's a decisive battle, though. . . . But, Mildred . . ."

"I'm all right." The pain ebbed in a sickening wave. The thunder of the guns shook the couch. The dry crackle of muskets shattered against the house. "It seems that all the battles are decisive . . ."

"I reckon it does seem that way to you, but this is Grant's direct assault on Richmond. All these other fights in the state are just other armies of his, trying to draw men away from Lee in front of the city."

"Must be desperate when they have to call out the boys at V.M.I. to fight off Sigel in the Valley."

"We've got our backs to the wall, no denying that. But our army'll take a lot of killing. Remember, in three years we've worn out a lot of Yankees and we've yet to be driven from a position."

"Maybe not in a battle, but the hunger . . . and no clothes. . . . Mother's cut the silk lining from Father's evening coat and is making ladies' evening gauntlets out of it. We're going to buy my husband a new uniform with what we get from selling the gauntlets. He's in rags—nearly barefooted and . . ." She had to stop to get her choked breath.

"I know, Mildred, that part is hard. My plantation was ruined by Sheridan. He burned my house."

"Oh, I didn't know that. I'm sorry, Dennis—" The pain wrenched again, suddenly, a violent clutching at her bowels. She could n't even bend forward to ease it. She knew, with instinctive panic, that this agony would not ease. She lay stiff and terrified, her brain numbed.

Dennis's vision was turned inward. "My people lived in that home for two hundred years. It was n't producing much, but it'll take years to produce anything again. I reckon it does n't matter about us as individuals now. It's the Cause."

The Cause . . . She heard the word dimly. Why should they be talking about the Cause now? A new life was writhing inside her and Brose was out there, where he couldn't come to her. *Mildred* . . . That sounded dim too and it came again and again like a sound under water. It was like someone calling her from far away. She tried to see through the haze. Through what appeared to be thick waves of heat, Dennis was swaying over her. His face looked very strange.

"You're sick. You're dripping wet. I—I must get your mother!"

She tried to answer. Yes, her mother and Aunt Abbie should be here now. They had had children. It was useless to try to hide the fact of hers any more. It moved with the frenzy of the muskets' screaming crackle. It was coming too soon. Brose would n't be here.

Dennis receded into the haze, growing smaller. She tried to call out. She was afraid to be alone. The fury of the thunder shook her as it shook the house, rattled her nerves as it did the window-panes. Dennis was gone, lost in the shadowy heat waves. The terror opened up and a crash of cannons blasted her down into it, crying out, crying out.

Brose, Brose . . . their backs to the wall . . . behind excellent breastworks. . . . Breastworks were for their love, were where she had lain on soft green pine tags, with the sun at high noon, and gray lines swept through her with red banners and bright bayonets and bugles blaring. Lee was marching north, to Pennsylvania.

The shrill cry of fifes and the hollow rattle of drums, passing outside, crashed with the dry crackle of muskets and the savage thunder of guns. Her mind cleared in one moment of white terror. He was out there behind a breastwork, in his tatters and floppy black hat, crouched in men's blood, crouched with his back to the city, just as he had been at *their* breastwork during the day of Seven Pines, just as his friend had been. She was alone, here, in this empty room. She heard cries in the house and running feet. She sank back down into the smothering, shadowy heat. . . .

When she emerged from the fog of pain, the guns were silent. The child was dead. All life within her now seemed dead too. She lay on the chaise longue, moved against the window, and stared over the gardens, wilting in the June heat.

For days she lay there, and waited for Brose. As the days passed into three weeks, a dry and bitter emotion stirred into feeble life. It was all she felt. She could not bear her mother or the two old ladies near her. She could not eat the unappetizing food they prepared for her. Nearly all she had was haw-root tea which Edmonia made and insisted she drink to keep up her strength.

Every time she heard a distant gun or a thin crackle of muskets, the emotion hardened into a resentment against Brose. The fight for Richmond at Cold Harbor was long over, and the armies had moved south in front of Petersburg, but he stayed in the lines when she had needed him most. The war was his life, and she was simply a part of the war to him. It had been so from the first. Even their marriage had waited two months, and even their wedding night had been sacrificed to the war. Still she waited, knowing only a hard core of hatred for the war.

When he came, she was no longer expecting him. John knocked and told her Brose was there. A moment later he stood in the doorway, a weary man worn wiry thin, with patches of black skin showing through holes in an open-throated butternut shirt, through rents in shapeless gray trousers with ragged bottoms flapping over odd shoes, without socks inside them. Black heat in his eyes flared out of a dark face, with hollowed cheeks, as he came slowly toward her.

"You've come too late." The words, unbidden, were spoken before she thought.

He stopped in the middle of the room. The flare died in his eyes. The morning light coming through the long windows bared his face. It was a stranger's face, and it was a stranger's voice that spoke so quietly, so wearily.

"Mildred, I don't blame you for feeling like that, but I came as soon as I could get away. You don't understand —"

"I understand that you stayed with the army rather than come here."

"*Rather?* Good God, I did n't have any choice. When I got your message we were hurrying to Petersburg. Grant had crossed the James — we could n't spare a man."

"Does Petersburg mean more to you than —"

"Mildred, don't you understand, if Petersburg had fallen, Richmond would have been cut off from the south and evacuated? The Yankees would have been here."

"Would I care if the Yankees had been here, if you'd been with me? They could burn the city and dance around the flames —"

"You talk like I did n't want to be here!" His voice deepened and a little angry strength came into it.

"You did n't, or you'd have come. You'd rather fight."

"I tell you, I did n't have any choice. I'm a captain now. I could n't walk out. If we had weakened anywhere, Richmond would have been lost."

"I don't care if it was. What does that mean to us?"

"Mildred, you're sick." His voice quieted again. "Good God, we could n't keep armies in the field without Richmond! The Confederacy would fall."

"I don't care if it does." She heard her own coldness and she wanted her words to be icicle sharp to cut through his soldier surface. "It's falling anyway. Nearly everything's gone and now Sherman is cutting the country in half in Georgia and then Atlanta will fall —"

"Let it fall!" He strode over beside her and his eyes were hot again. "New Orleans and Nashville and Vicksburg and the whole damned Mississippi fell, and Chattanooga and Tennessee and now Georgia, but it took them three years to get that far because we kept so many of them here, and by the time they get the rest, we'll have kept so many more here they'll be ready to quit."

"Soldier logic. I hear it on all sides. You-all've got everything all reasoned out — *except* that you're using the last men of the South and their armies are growing all the time."

"It's not getting them anywhere, is it? Grant's lost more men in this campaign than we had in the army."

"What if he has? Oh, don't you see it's hopeless?"

"No, I don't. We slaughtered Grant at Cold Harbor and —"

"Yes, and we lost our child at Cold Harbor."

His mood broke then. He was silent for a moment. "Mildred, if you just would n't talk like I did it, like I could've left the army."

"Oh, I don't mean that. I don't know what I mean except that I'm sick of living like this. I'm sick of the war!"

"I know you're sick of it. It's worse on you waiting here, especially after losing the child. But, Mildred, Grant just can't go on forever losing men like he is now."

Her fury passed. It was the argument of them all. They could go on fighting, and that's all they saw. She could n't go against it any more. She spoke the fear that lay close to her heart.

"Brose, we have n't got forever."

"I know." He leaned down, resting his bruised and scabby hand on the arm of the lounge beside her. "But it won't be forever. You would n't want me to quit now, would you?"

Her senses were filled with his familiar male odor, but instead of being clean and sharp, it was blurred by sweat and dust, powder smoke and dried blood. It stirred up her bitter emotion, confusing and resentful.

"I want peace, whether you quit or not. I want to have you with me. I want to know I won't lose you. I've lost everything else and if I should lose you too —"

"You won't lose me, Mildred. You're talking this way because you're upset. Now, look —"

She drew away from him, pushed into the corner of the lounge. "Upset? What's to keep me from being upset? Here I am alone all day and night in this half-closed house with three frightened old women. All I hear is guns in the daytime and drums for somebody's funeral at night. All I see out of the window is wagons of wounded, wagons and cannons, wagons and men walking on their bare feet. Sometimes I think I'll go crazy if I hear another cannon."

His calloused hand lay on her arm. "You'll be better when you're stronger."

She pulled her arm away. "You're not caring about me, whether I'll get stronger or not. You're just trying to quiet me so you can go back to your fighting. Well, go back! I've been alone all the time, I reckon I can be alone forever."

He stood up slowly, his hands dropping beside him, and behind his eyes that deep feeling which she did n't understand lay bared. Her nerves were like hard coils expanding, straining to break. When he did n't speak, they did break and her body was filled by demons.

"That's right, don't say anything. Don't lie." She was screaming and she could n't stop. "You've gotten all you want out of me. My father told me you would. Well, you have, you hear that, you have. Now you're a captain. You're commanding men—gentlemen. You're not a warehouse clerk. You're Captain Kirby of Pickett's famous division. What have I got to offer you against that?"

Suddenly she was looking at the shredded shirt on his back and he was striding across the floor. Shaggy dark hair fell over his collar. She sat still on the edge of the chaise longue, staring after him. She hated him. Her breath came hard with her hate. He passed through the door.

She started to tremble. She was wet from the June heat. Without thought, she jumped from the couch. She ran across the room. She staggered into the hall and heard the downstairs door close.

"Brose! Brose!"

Her hysterical voice echoed through the silent house. The shaking of her body was as it had been when the cannons thundered at Cold Harbor. She leaned against the doorjamb, clung to it. She could n't get her breath as sobs heaved through her. Away off a gun growled and she heard the sullen rumble of caissons over flagstones. She sank to the floor. She would never stop weeping.

August - September, 1864

CHAPTER XXVIII

“The subject of recruiting the ranks of our army is growing in importance. . . . I think there must be more men in the country liable to military duty than the small number of recruits would seem to indicate. . . . Without some increase of strength, I cannot see how we can escape the natural military consequences of the enemy’s numerical superiority. . . .”—
General Lee to Secretary of War Seddon, August 23, 1864

It was the first dead man he had ever seen. All the men in the new reserve battalion gaped at the body and looked away. One got sick. Lorenzo Duke could n’t take his eyes from the crumpled figure, lying in the bushes beside the road. It was n’t so much that the soldier was dead; it was the way he looked in death, lying under the hot August sun.

There were neat patches on his brown worsted trousers, and rents in his butternut-dyed shirt were carefully sewed. His canteen and haversack and bullet pouch were still slung across his shoulder and lay close to his hand. His arm was crooked over the shiny rifle. That man yesterday had polished his rifle, filled his canteen at a spring, hoarded half of his small ration of hardtack and half an ear of corn from a farmer’s field; by the campfire he had mended his shirt with a needle sent from home and patched his trousers with cloth from a worn-out coat. From it all he would never get any use.

It was this waste of all that a man did for his body and his needs that Lorenzo could n’t forget, long after the column had trudged beyond the dead man. The mended clothes, the accoutrements of soldier and of man, were still alive, as they had been yesterday, ready

for his use. He thought of his own uniform, tailored from the best cadet-gray cloth, of his calfskin knapsack and metal canteen, of the fine leather belt from which hung his bayonet and bullet pouch. He thought of the big Blackwell house on East Clay where he lived with his father, where his large room, overlooking the garden, held all his belongings, all his civilian clothes bulging in the wardrobe. He thought of the lights at night on Broad Street; of Ida Vernon playing *East Lynn* at the Richmond Theatre; of new girls dancing at the Richmond Varieties on Franklin Street, and, around the corner, new girls in the houses of Locust Alley; of ladies strolling down Franklin and through Capitol Square, whom he could watch from the sprawling verandah of the St. Clair, whom he could discuss in Swan Tavern. All that would wait for him, part and parcel of his living, alive and ready for his use as were the accoutrements of that dead soldier. One bullet, one slug of lead, would waste it all. It would all wait and he would never know it again.

The creepy feeling stayed with him. When he heard the firing ahead, the feeling swelled. The deepening musket volleys rattled through the woods. He shook suddenly with the crash of thunder. There was a shattering blast.

"Gawd A'mighty, that must 've been another Crater!" somebody cried.

"Crater your ass," the wooden-legged officer yelled. "If you had n't skulked in Richmond all during the war, you'd know that was only a battery of three-pounders."

"Must be right round that bend, though."

"That firing's at least two miles away." There was a snarl in Major Warwick's voice. "The way you bastards march, it'll be night by the time you get there."

"Mr. Officer." The voice was a cool drawl. "We're not in the regular army, after all. Don't you think you should moderate your language in dealing with reserves, who were forced into this?"

Lorenzo saw Major Baylor Warwick stop short, jamming his wooden leg in the dirt. A big blue revolver jumped out of a holster. He took a long hop on the wooden leg, and the revolver

jabbed into the ribs of a tall young man in a beautifully cut uniform. He was one of the damned aristocrats who used to laugh at Lorenzo. He was n't laughing now. He was as white as that corpse had been.

"You sniveling little son of a bitch," the major said, "if you open your pretty lips again, I'll blast your — guts out." He held the big gun there. The whole column had slowed down. "Move on!" he roared. He stuck the gun back in the holster and hobbled ahead. "Step up there, sergeant. We want to get to this battle. Grant thinks Lee's got so few men over here in front of Richmond that he'll take the city in a walk. You might be sorry substitutes for soldiers, but, for Christ's sake, remember your families are in Richmond. If we get up in time we can lay it into those Yankee bastards and make them stay over on the south side of the river and fight the army for a change. *Move!*"

The man next to Lorenzo was a bank clerk. He had bought two substitutes and then been swept into the final conscript enforcement with Lorenzo.

"You know, Duke," he whispered, "I believe they're going to keep us out here, practically in the regular army."

Lorenzo did n't say anything. He was thinking fast, with the clear coolness he had used when he bought at auction down in Wilmington, when he bought at army impressment prices last spring and faked his reports so he could turn some of the goods over to his father to sell at retail.

"Don't you think so?" the man whispered in a persistent plea.

"Shut up," Lorenzo said. "I'm tryin' to think."

A fat grocer behind him bellowed. "'Tain't while to think. You're in the army now."

"Like hell," said the tall man beside the grocer. He was an auctioneer and Lorenzo hated him because he'd squeezed the Dukes out of some contraband drug business. He wore the finest flowered waistcoats in Richmond. "I've no intention of being a skyrocket when they blow up a Crater under me."

A young Jew whose father had kept him out gave a rasping laugh.

"The papers are full of Jews robbing the city and refusing to fight for their country. I wish the reporters could hear you-all."

"Keep quiet, Ikey," the auctioneer said.

"Not for you do I have to keep quiet. I'm not afraid to fight. It was my father kept me out so we could make money, more than any of you." His voice was edged with laughter. "We've still got two hundred barrels of flour and you know what they sell for? Three hundred dollars a barrel. But I'm not such a fool as to think the Yankees would build a Crater over here, like at Petersburg."

"Don't talk about that Crater," the bank clerk beside Lorenzo whined. "Blowing up three hundred men like that. What kind of war is that?"

"Yankee kind," the fat grocer bellowed. "That's what we're marchin' to now, fella."

"You don't think they'd try a Crater over here, do you?" The clerk was whimpering.

"Use your head," the Jew said. His voice was full of good spirits. "It did n't work over there, did it? It proved a trap for the Yankees, did n't it? Why should they use it against us? From the way you-all talk, they'd only have to say boo at you, anyway."

"You know a thing or two, Ikey," the grocer rumbled.

"Shut up, back there," Major Warwick yelled. He stood out from the column, his wooden leg planted in the ground. "Do you want them to know you're coming?"

"They could n't hear us over this racket."

"*Shut up!* I was n't asking you anything. Oh, Jesus, why should I have to fight with such lily-livered fools? Pick it up, you whining bastards, pick it up!"

The line moved along faster. The ground-shaking blasts had stopped, and the dry crackle was thinning. The only steady firing was the distant guns that always boomed at Drewry's Bluff. No one paid any attention to them any more.

The August heat beat down. The dust rose like a mist. The creepy feeling was dying in Lorenzo, but the thoughts it created

were pressing at his brain. When night fell he could easily disappear in these woods. It was only four miles back to Richmond. His father would hide him some way and he could wait till the whole thing was over. They had plenty of money. The Confederacy could n't prove anything against him after the war. He would n't care what people in Richmond thought. They had never liked him anyway. But he'd have the money when they were starving. Plenty of others were deserting.

Ahead, the firing died away. A horseman galloped out of the woods and skidded his horse to a stop by the officer. Major Warwick yelled at them to halt. Lorenzo dropped his musket in the dirt of Charles City Road. Ahead he saw the turnstile gates where the New Kent Road branched off. All the men opened their canteens. He unscrewed the top of his and the warm water trickled down his throat. It only made him hotter.

The horseman saluted and his horse lunged ahead. He came galloping past them and Lorenzo saw the grim, sweating face of the rider. Major Warwick faced them and yelled: "Fields stopped them up ahead and Wade Hampton, coming up with Rooney Lee, has driven them back. We'll make camp here, right behind the second line of fortifications. To-morrow we man them. Lee has got to have those men back on his Petersburg line. Now try to act like soldiers."

Lorenzo heard the long sigh sough along the line. They fell out, into the woods. Sergeants and lieutenants bawled orders. Axes laid into trees. Squads cleared spaces for a mess fire. Lorenzo dropped his knapsack and musket. The Jew came up to him with a big pail in each hand. He was grinning.

"Come on, Duke, we're to find a spring for water for our mess."

Lorenzo looked at him a moment, studying the swarthy face. He decided almost immediately he could n't take him into his confidence. Anyway, looking through the woods for the spring would show him the way out when darkness fell.

"Go ahead, Ikey," he said. "I'm with you."

He walked behind the young Jew. The company was beginning

to talk. He heard them grumbling about having to stay in the lines. He saw their faces blistered from the sun, their hands red from chopping wood and holding muskets. Inside he gave a tight smile. To-morrow morning he would be in his soft bed in the old Blackwell house.

"The army is utterly demoralized . . . they are deserting by hundreds . . . it shows what I have always believed, that the great popular heart is not now and never has been in the war. . . . Saturday night may yet come to all of our troubles and be followed by the blessed hours of rest."—*Governor Vance, of North Carolina*

In the square reception hall of the White House of the Confederacy no sound could be heard except the distant rumble of cannon. Through glass panels beside the front door gray light filtered. The room was chilly, and to St. George Paxton, glancing at the black hat and umbrella on the dark-stained coat rack, the place had a sepulchral air. He moved across to the arched doorway opening on the little hall, from the rear of which stairs curved upward and down to the basement. In the front a window overlooked Clay Street. The old man leaned wearily against the wall and looked through the window. September's Indian summer was passing and the leaves were fading from the trees. The sky was dull gray.

From the French windows, opening off the ballroom in the rear of this house, he had seen some beautiful skies. He had seen those skies when the high-vaulted rooms of this big house hummed with voices, laughing and excited, undertoned by soft melodies. *In Dixie-land I'll take my stand* . . .

Those were the days when President Davis was the hope of the new empire. St. George remembered when all the statesmen had

gathered in the new capitol: when Georgia's Toombs voiced his flaming policies as Secretary of State; when Barnwall Rhett, Chairman of Foreign Affairs, advanced bold policies for European recognition, and silver-tongued Yancey sailed abroad; when Vice President Stephens was an inspiration with his pure integrity; when red-faced Mallory, Texas' rugged Reagan, Louisiana's bland Jew Benjamin, and St. George's own superior, Memminger, were unknown quantities. Those were the days when imported evening gowns shone against bright new uniforms with gold braid and yellow sashes, when the spirit was as youthful as their country, with youth's high confidence and laughing courage, when bands played all day. *I'll live and die in Dixie . . .* Those were the days when he had almost hoped.

Now the hopes of the people were as shaken as his had long been. Toombs was throttled by Davis and had long since resigned; Barnwall Rhett, his policies crushed, attacked the administration from his South Carolina newspaper; Yancey, made foolish in England when Davis refused him power of treaty, was dead, his bitter attacks on the President still quoted; Stephens, bewildered, had retreated into legal pedantry. St. George had always thought him too idealistic. As for the others, he occasionally saw Mallory, more red-faced than ever, who still gave oyster and champagne parties for all his inefficiency as Navy Secretary. Memminger, cautious and resourceless to the last, had finally resigned. Benjamin, easily the best man of them all, remained bland, unworried. He smoked his Havanas and sipped his Madeira and let the rabble roar.

St. George did not resent Benjamin's good living. He looked down at his own frayed woolen gloves, knitted by his wife, and the only resentment he felt was that his poverty had all been for nothing. He glanced up the winding stairs where a poor sick man moved pins over the map of the Confederacy, building an impregnable system of theoretical defense, while Lee's tattered veterans were crouched at last with their backs to the wall. Never once had Lee possessed the man power to take advantage of his victories over McClellan, Pope, Burnside, Hooker, and Grant.

St. George shook his head. It was that sick bureaucrat upstairs who had made all their sacrifices futile. Davis's mind was a type he had never trusted. He had made enemies from the first by maintaining the country needed more of Benjamin's realism and less of Davis's lofty idealism. It was no comfort now that the Confederacy was losing faith in the President, that they saw at last that he had nothing but high principles when they needed action. Davis had been like that from the first.

When the troops had needed bread, Davis had declared days of fasting and prayer; when the armies had needed men for invasion he had proclaimed in fine words the rights of the Confederacy; when his forces needed consolidation he had dissipated them in details of defense to prove to the world that the Confederacy was not overrun everywhere. When the public had clamored for the removal of Bragg and his own officers voted no confidence, Davis removed the officers and left Bragg in charge of the Army of the West, until that nervously organized martinet could himself no longer face his successive disasters. Then he flaunted his support of Bragg by appointing the wretched man military adviser. When the public wanted Forrest in Bragg's place, he gave them Joe Johnston. When the army had gained confidence in Johnston, he supplanted him with Hood.

He fought for his principles of absolute power while some of the armies fought under incompetent generals and all of the country was overrun by their enemies. Now that Hood had been outmanœuvred and overpowered by Sherman, now that Atlanta had fallen and Georgia's governor had lost his courage, now that the one hope of peace and independence lay in a crushing victory by Lee, the President fulfilled his destiny by pushing pins and spinning words of rhetoric.

St. George turned when the President's secretary came down the stairs. He handed the old man the papers the President had signed and went back up. St. George was glad to be out of the house. There was a fall dampness in the air, but it was better than the dreary chill of the White House. He walked slowly past the old

houses on Clay Street, their gardens drooped and faded, and thought of all his friends who had once sipped their brandies on the rear balconies. Now they were scattered, the men dead, the women forced out by poverty.

Across the street, the gray house of his war friend needed painting. The stone slabs flanking the steps were weather-dirty and the iron fence palings were rusty. St. George had heard that Virginius was at home to-day, sick. He crossed the street to see him. The door was opened by that thin, worried woman he had met at Mildred Wade's wedding, the gentle creature from the Valley. She gave him a smile that was sad to see and took him down the wide centre hall to the library St. George had first entered that winter night many months ago.

The room was cluttered now worse than before. Chairs and sofas and ottomans crowded it like an auction room, and knickknacks and bric-a-brac covered every possible surface. The grayed man sat behind his desk, as he had that first night, and he looked startled when St. George entered. He wore an old dressing gown over his suit, and run-down house slippers. His collar was soiled and frayed, and his discolored cravat loosely tied. He did n't rise.

"Excuse my not getting up," he said in a low voice. "My belly is all swollen from eating cow peas. Can you find somewhere to sit? We've given up our two parlors to boarders. Most of the furniture was sold, but the rest is in here."

St. George removed three cushions from a wing chair and sat down. He knew then that he was very tired himself. "I heard you were ill," he said.

"Yes, and I'm afraid of a cold. It's chilly in here, but we can't afford a fire so early. In fact, I don't know how we'll afford one at all. Wood at ninety dollars a cord —"

"Yes, Virginius," St. George said gently, "I know. I was just by the President's. It might assure you to know that he has no fires either."

"He ought to have the hottest fires of hell." There was sick bitterness in Virginius' voice.

"Maybe, but don't you think we'd all be wiser to think something of ourselves now and less of the Confederacy?"

Virginius raised his sunken eyes in reproach. "Saint, our only hope is for us all to cling and fight together."

"But we are n't. Brown threatens every day to withdraw Georgia from the Confederacy. He's already taken all the soldiers he can from the armies to keep them in Georgia, and Vance is almost as bad about North Carolina. We can't go on without the support of those states."

"We don't need any support from the likes of Brown. Virginia has had armies overrunning her state for four years, burning and destroying, and as soon as he gets a taste of an army invading Georgia he hollers, 'Enough.' We are better off without him, and Vance too."

"Yes, but those armies have impoverished us. Sheridan's defeat of Early's puny little army has finished even the Valley as a source of supply. We're being isolated in this siege, and we can't hold out indefinitely —"

"You talk as if this siege could last indefinitely!" Virginius sat up and his voice raised. "Grant can't keep losing men the way he is."

"Virginius, don't you realize we're losing men, too — by desertion, from starvation? We can't replace those men."

"We could if this conscript bureau was worth a damn," Virginius said violently. "General Lee keeps writing that they must give him men; Congress keeps debating and does nothing. There are men here. Kemper told me the other day there were forty thousand able-bodied men in the state on government details."

"If all men were like you, Virginius, it would be different. But we have our share of politicians and speculators."

"So has the North! And let me tell you, if McClellan is elected this war will be over. There're plenty of people up there tired of it. In his Presidential campaign McClellan will point out the colossal losses of Grant and —"

"— and Lincoln will point out that the Confederacy is cut in

two, everything of importance lost but Richmond, and now they can concentrate on us. Don't you think they know as well as we do that if Lee's line from Richmond to Petersburg has to keep stretching south to guard the railroads, it's bound to break? God, man, there are only thirty-some thousand in his line now, spread over twenty miles. In July Lincoln got 300,000 fresh men! We have n't that many in the South—in the army and out. And who've we got out yonder on the Richmond side of the river now? Our old men and young boys, cripples, clerks from government offices, mechanics we need in our ordnance works. Who will we put there when they go?"

"Ourselves!" Virginius leaned forward, his face flushed in mottled splotches.

"Not me, Virginius. I'm too old," St. George said gently. And then he decided to have it out. "Would you mind telling me why you feel so passionately about this?"

Virginius was silent so long that St. George thought he would n't answer. Then, abruptly, he spoke.

"Yes, I'll tell you." His tension was closer to the surface. "For years I've had nothing in my life . . . since my first wife. I've lived like a machine. Love was over for me. Ambition is a cold thing. . . . The Confederacy gave me something to live for."

The old beau moved uneasily. "Virginius, I have not known you long, but I have known you well. Out of my affection, will you permit me to say that it grieves me to see you clinging to a lost cause?"

"Do I understand you to infer that you have no faith in our ultimate success?"

"I have faith only in the wisdom of rescuing our state before it is too late."

Virginius rose slowly, and St. George was no longer facing a friend. The war clerk spoke with cold formality.

"I have no interest whatsoever in the faith of a croaker. I am surprised to know that the man who has shared my confidence is

such. As long as you maintain your cynical attitude there can be nothing for us to say to one another."

St. George was shocked into silence. He sat very still and all the implications of the words spread through him. He sighed and pulled himself wearily up.

"I am sorry, Virginius, deeply sorry that you must allow your passions to intrude in our friendship. I can only say that if ever you change, I shall be waiting to—grasp your hand again."

For a moment Virginius Kirby said nothing. For a moment St. George hoped. But the face closed tight, its loose flesh sagging around the deep lines, and the voice came coldly. "Good day to you, sir."

St. George bowed. He picked his way through the clutter of the room into the wide hall. Strangers, probably boarders, talked in low voices in a doorway off the hall. He passed their stares, and out into the fall dampness under the slate-gray sky. Down by the river the guns rumbled. He knew he would never again see Virginius Kirby as a friend. The dampness chilled him through.

"Yesterday our citizens were allowed to spend a tranquil Sunday. There was no vestige of the excitement of the previous day, and only at long intervals could the booming of a distant cannon be heard. It is well ascertained from examination of the field . . . that the enemy has suffered immense loss . . . traces of many . . . amputations, in the shape of arms and legs, have been found. . . ."—*Richmond Examiner*, October 3, 1864

When they moved into the lines they knew that Fort Harrison had fallen, and the line of fortifications around the city was broken.

Charles Kirby saw General Ewell on a gray horse, waving his hat and shouting. The sun glittered on his bald head and his

wooden leg jerked back and forth in the stirrup. Officers scurried from him to the batteries unlimbering behind the breastwork. The Yankees were attacking all along the rest of the line. Colonel Leatherbury halted them and ran to the officers.

The smoke was thick in the woods and they stayed at the edge, waiting for orders. Over the field it drifted in trailing veils, hanging close to the dry grass. Charles kept peering through it toward Fort Harrison. He glimpsed segments of fresh earth thrown up where the open end had been. The Yankees were throwing up a wall against counterattack, and making the earthen fort a square. He wondered how many men had been lost, and if their old guns would now be turned on them.

Muskets, rattling over the rolling boom of guns, echoed and re-echoed through the woods, and nobody knew where the fighting was now. Ahead, at the breastworks, the batteries were unlimbered and Charles could tell by the ragged uniforms that the artillerymen were regulars. They must have been hurried over from the Petersburg lines. Colonel Leatherbury came running back, his sword bared in his hand. Charles saw that his face was very grave.

"Men!" he yelled. His powerful voice reverberated through the woods, cutting through all the din. "If the Yanks make another break, Richmond is lost. We're being sent forward as the skirmish line. It's the most hazardous work we've ever done, but you must hold until regulars come from the Petersburg line."

The high-voiced cheer of the boys rolled down from the right, and the old men with Charles shouted in hoarse and wavering voices. Charles gripped his musket tightly. This was what he had wanted months ago. He wanted to fight as his sons fought.

"At the double-quick, foh-wad . . . hawoh!"

Charles jumped out through the brush and saw the boys sweeping out in a beautiful line on his right. The old men with him came on raggedly, breathing hard, stumbling, no order, but they were coming. His own breath came in choppy gusts and his racing heart seemed to be swelling up in his throat. Yet he didn't feel like these old men with him. He felt like one of those boys. He

used to run through these very woods, yelling at the top of his lungs, out of good spirits, and he did n't feel much different now than he had in those days. Only his body seemed really changed.

Right in front of him, behind the banded Parrott guns, he recognized the short jackets of the Richmond Howitzers. He yelled. These men in the Third Company were friends of Paul's, now with the Second Company moving into the Valley to join Early's retreating army. But fellow artillerymen brought the boy close, and now, at last, he was fighting with his sons.

The toughened, grimy red jackets cheered as the old men passed, and Charles shouted in exultation. This was the happiest moment of his life. He threw himself down against the soft red-clay embankment that had just been thrown up to face the old line broken at Fort Harrison.

He wiped his eyes with his fist. As they cleared, his vision was filled with a wall of blue men moving across the broken ground in front of the Fort. Down there, waiting for them, were crouched the mechanics and workers from the armory and arsenal. Their muskets crackled. The blue mass swept on toward them. Buttons gleamed in the smoke and their fine uniforms looked like the parades in Richmond in the early days. Then cannon blasted and the ground shook and smoke billowed from the right end of the line where Dance's battery was posted. The blue lines kept moving on the guns. General Ewell, jabbing his gray horse with his wooden leg, galloped past, shouting, toward the action. His shout was swallowed in the eerie wail of the Rebel Yell.

Out of the swirling fog of dust and smoke behind him, Charles saw a dark horde rush with a rising shriek. *The Texans . . . the Texas and Tennessee brigades. . . . Brigades?* Through the hot mist they seemed scarcely more than five hundred all together, moving to save the guns. "Hold 'em heah, old men, we'll be back and help you soon's we finish 'em up theah." Then they were gone, a cyclone rushing on a howling wind.

A rock thudded into the soft earth in front of Charles and something whistled over his head. Somebody in the Howitzers yelled.

Right in front of him a blurred blue line was drifting from the mass at his right. Charles rested his musket on the earth, tried to steady the wavering sight, and pulled the trigger. *Commence firing.* . . . The ground heaved and the crash of the Howitzers shook him and the blast sang in his eardrums. He bent down to reload.

He was quivering with exultance. This is what he should have been doing all those months he had been fiddling at drug substitutions. That was a shameful thing for a man who had owned his own drugstore for nearly thirty years. He had felt like a peddler, marketing his wares. Now, all the men in the family were fighting and he could walk with his sons.

He peered over the breastwork again. The hot smoke had thickened so that he could see nothing. He pointed on a dead level and fired anyway. When he reloaded he noticed that the guns of Dance's battery were silent. The musket fire was divided, throwing weird echoes through the woods. He peered over. Still he could see nothing. He fired again.

The musket rattle had thinned and the division in the sound was clearer. He strained his eyes. A rent in the billowing smoke revealed the glinting guns of Dance's battery, and around them rags fluttered in the wind like flags. None was blue. The veterans had fought the Yanks off the guns.

"Fire, men, for God's sake, fire!" The frantic voice moved behind him. General Ewell's gray was plunging. "They're coming at your end. Hold this skirmish line till the regulars get back here. Let 'em have it now!"

The Howitzers' guns smashed over him again. He fired. He fired again and again. Dark blurs loomed in the sulphurous mist before him.

"Oh, Jesus," the old man next him moaned, "here they come."

Then over Charles swept again the high, howling wind of the Rebel Yell. It tingled through him, and rose from his own parched throat. The hairy veterans of the Tennessee and Texas brigades plunged past him, and bayonets flashed bright. They were swal-

lowed up in the hot cloud. For a moment Charles did n't know what was happening. Then the crackle receded. Rifts split the smoke and he saw blurred clots of Yankees falling back.

He could n't believe the attack was over. The old men beside him still clutched their muskets. The veterans were backing toward the breastworks. They did n't act as though they were coming out of action. Already they were filling pipes and talking. One of their officers said: "Wonder where the bastards'll come next."

"Not here, pray God," the old man next to Charles moaned. "Not here."

"Heh-heh-heh!" The veterans looked down at them. "You fit 'em off all right, Gran'pa. If you-all had n't held the skirmish line the guns would a been lost." They climbed over the breastworks and re-formed behind the old men.

Suddenly Charles was very tired. The batteries were silent all along the line. The smoke was lifting. Dead men lay out in front of them. He turned around and sat with his back to the breastwork. The old men were lying down. They looked dead. One of them was. Poor old man Porthrees, he had three daughters at home. Quintius Porthrees was his name. He used to come out here, as Charles did, to hunt chinquapins.

It must have been right around here that he had hunted chinquapins, just this time of year, when Brose and Paul were children. They would come down the Osborne Turnpike and turn off in the woods just about at the bend in the river where the fort at Chaffin's Bluff was now. They followed roughly this line of breastworks that reached from the river to Williamsburg Road, and then northward around the city. And they would come this far when they would find a cleared space and have their lunch of cold fried chicken and hard-boiled eggs and Virginia ham. Chickens and eggs and ham . . . when would any of them ever taste those again? And chinquapins . . . all the bushes had been destroyed.

The lines had been quiet for a long time, except the guns that constantly rumbled down by Drewry's Bluff. Occasionally the wind brought a wavering sound of distant muskets. "They're our men,"

one of the artillerymen told them. "They're firing at Butler working on his canal. He's trying to open a way from one bend of the river to the other, so he can flank our lines that have got him bottled up."

The old men were talking proudly of how they'd held the skirmish line and fought off two attacks and saved Richmond. Charles noticed that the officers of the regulars were not talking. They stood on stumps and peered through field glasses. Then Colonel Leatherbury, a sabre rent in his jacket, a bullet hole in his hat, came up very quietly.

"Watch the line closely now, men. They're coming again. This will be the worst."

Charles was still tired. Excitement had taken his little strength. The pride fell quickly from the old men. They started mumbling. As soon as Charles poked his rifle over the earthwork, he heard the roar of Salem's four guns on his left.

They're trying Fort Gilmer. . . . In front of the earthen fort a flat of ground was covered with stumps, and the felled trees lay there with the branches still attached. The blue mass was moving through them. As the smoke, floating out from another battery on the left of the fort, drifted over the advancing line, Charles glimpsed the faces. *Niggers . . .* Muskets rattled from the high ground of the fort itself and Charles saw another blue line, misty in the fog; and then, a dim blur, came a third. Behind the fort the gray veterans of the Texas and Tennessee brigades moved up with a high yell. The fight for Fort Gilmer was on.

The old men watched tensely. No blue lines drifted out to where they were. Charles saw the deep, wide ditch in front of the earthen wall suddenly filled with struggling dark bodies. They scrambled up. Bayonets flashed from the top. A rifle butt swung. The bodies fell back. Smoke covered them all. He could hear the screams of the enraged veterans. The Unions had made a mistake to send negroes against them. That fort would never fall.

The fire was thinning and the hot fog spread like a torn blanket. He saw the blue blurs fading back. *If that fort had fallen Rich-*

mond would've fallen. . . . Then one of the Howitzers yelled: "Here come some troops from the Petersburg line! Now I know we're safe. I think that first regiment's from Pickett. It is! That's the First Virginia Regiment."

First Virginia . . . Brose would be leading a company with them. Charles leaped to his feet—Captain Kirby would see his father in the skirmish line they had held. He peered, straining, through the smoke veils in the woods behind the lines. There were some gray, moving men.

A blow crashed terribly into the base of his skull, shooting lights before his eyes. For a moment he could n't see. Then another blow struck him, a softer blow that seemed to hit him all over. He tried hard to see. His lids fluttered open. He was lying on the ground. He started to move his arms to get up. His arms were lifeless. Frantically, he tried to get his legs under him. His legs were lifeless. The lifelessness crept over his whole body. He tried to cry out, but there was no sound in his throat. Then his eyes closed. He opened them right away, but he could n't see anything. Everything was black and he was falling. Could this be dying? No, it could n't be! Brose was here and this was where they hunted chinquapins.

CHAPTER XXIX

"The Rebels now have their last men in the ranks . . . the little boys and old men are guarding prisons, bridges, entrenched positions . . . they have robbed the cradle and the grave to get their present force . . . the armies of the Union will soon meet with no resistance." — *General U. S. Grant*

More than two weeks had passed since Mr. Kirby's funeral, and Brose had not yet come into Richmond. Mildred had n't seen him since that hot June day, after the child's death, when he had come from the trenches, and returned with her hysterical words following him. Now came his letter saying that he would be shifted back to the Petersburg line without a furlough:—

"Skirmishing has been so heavy we don't even have time to shave. There has n't been a real attack on Richmond since Fort Gilmer and it looks like Grant is trying to make General Lee keep men on this side of the river to weaken the Petersburg line. We have hardly over 30,000 in the army now, and Grant has God knows how many, with Sheridan in the Valley too, but so far he has n't gotten anywhere hitting our Petersburg line. Our desertions are growing very heavy. Letters telling of starving at home make the men leave, and they are hungry themselves. We've only had a few stale crackers for the last three days. So, between desertions and Grant's hammering at the south side, it looks like we'll be withdrawn from here any day now to support the Petersburg line. They're keeping the Locals here, but they desert in droves. No hope of a furlough. . . ."

He could n't return to the trenches for the winter siege until she had seen him once and recaptured the mood of their love as it

had been before her hysteria drove him from the house. She had begged his forgiveness in letters, and he had said he understood. She knew he had understood; he had all the time.

It was she who had n't realized, until too late, that even such tough nerves as his could be worn by war to the edge. When he had stood in the doorway, blackened and ragged and fought to the bone, she had not understood that he must have suffered as much as she. That new, strange depth of feeling had lain bare behind his eyes, but she had not read it. Later, she had known it was his sorrow for her, his first experience of grief.

When she did know it he had gone, and something had gone from their love. Nothing that she could write him would bring it back, nothing but being in his arms again, with her face against his, telling him, and hearing him say, "I love you, Mildred." She wanted to hear him say it as he used to, with violence in his voice, recklessness on his face, and the glare in his black eyes. Suddenly, as she held his letter in her hand, she knew that if he could n't come to her, she must go to him.

She called John and told him to hitch the horse to the buggy. She tiptoed up to her room for a cloak and hat and her purse. She lifted the carpet and took out her small store of Confederate bills and stuffed them in her bag. She could take him something. She moved quietly downstairs, wanting to avoid her mother and the two old ladies. She stepped out on the iron balcony to wait.

Autumn was on the city, a dull autumn that brought no renascence of spirit, no sense of expectancy. It was sad without sweetness, sombre without passion, a season dying without splendor. When she had driven out to the lines before, with Brose, summer was in full bloom and peace lay on the green countryside rolling toward the sky. To-day the guns rumbled down the river, those guns that had become as much a natural part of the city sounds as the church bells, the wounded wagons, and the singing negroes, marching through the streets to work on the fortifications.

John drove the buggy around to the front of the house. The peeling frame of the buggy and its sagging top behind the mangy,

raw-boned horse were even worse than the rig Brose had hired last year. And this was all that was left of the carriages and phaetons, the saddle and harness horses, on which her father had lavished such care. She climbed in and John held the reins, his liquid eyes full of questions.

"I'm just taking a little drive, John." She forced a smile. "The house is stifling."

Reluctantly he released the reins and shook his head. "Bad times, Miss Mildred."

He stood there, watching her mournfully, as she sent the horse at a sloppy trot down Franklin Street. Bad times all right. In Capitol Square she saw hundreds of men in civilian clothes milling around behind the iron-railed fence. The gates were closed and Winder's guards stood there with bayoneted rifles. The dragnet of the conscription act herded them in there every day. They were young and old, in all stages of well-being. From their clothes, few were poor. The poor were in the army. But the frock coats and white linen and shiny beavers suggested many from the commission houses and the auction rooms.

She turned down Main Street. She thought that if a stranger came here for the first time he would have a poor conception of Richmond. Red auction flags dotted the buildings. Not a young man was on the street. Most of the men were the motley transients who had taken over the city. They were the gamblers and thieves, the spies and speculators, the riffraff and adventurers from all corners of the earth, who walked where the men in the army had walked and plundered what the army was fighting for. They looked at her boldly out of cold, shrewd eyes, and there was none for them to fear. The wounded soldiers on the street shuffled, with their eyes to the ground, and the government men, haggard and worried, walked with their eyes turned inward. But even with the wounded soldiers, the weary government men, and the strangers strutting with gold-headed canes, the men were few for Richmond's Main Street. The detailed soldiers patrolling the streets for conscripts had driven them to hiding, or to the army.

Again and again she saw soldiers accost a civilian and demand that he show reason why he was not in the army. If he could n't, he swelled the mob in Capitol Square.

She passed the Confederate Navy shipyards and the muddy river swung out before her. Several new ships lay at anchor. The Flag of Truce boat was rounding the bend, but no Confederate prisoners would be returning on it. Grant had stopped all exchange. Yet the United States still howled against the starvation of their prisoners at Libby. It did seem that her father had been right when he insisted that the North hated the South. United States soldiers had devastated Virginia and, knowing that, the Union people denounced Virginians for not feeding prisoners better, when they had nothing for themselves. They forgot, too, that Southerners fared hard in Union prisons. But no one talked any more about the justice or injustice of the war. All she heard now was talk of peace.

The street curved away from the river and the buggy shook over the bumpy streets of Rocketts. Slatternly women appeared in the doorways and jeered her. A man in a dirty Confederate uniform looked out a door and yelled a word. She brushed the whip over the horse and he moved faster, leaving them laughing behind her.

Chimborazo Heights loomed in the distance and the rough board shacks of its hospital were outlined against the sky. Now that she was well again and the heat had passed, she must return to a hospital. She had heard that nurses were badly needed at the crowded Chimborazo. It was a gruesome-looking place. The houses dropped behind her, and ahead the road turned up around Fulton Hill. No green arch of trees shadowed it to-day. At the curve two negro women sat behind a board table at the edge of the road.

As she drew closer Mildred saw small black mounds on pieces of paper on the table. This might be something she could take Brose, if she had enough shinplasters in her purse. She pulled the horse to a stop.

"Are those meat pies?"

"Yes, ma'am, that they are, 'n' only five dollahs apiece."

"They're rather small for that."

"Full er meat, though, ma'am. Been sellin' 'em all day."

"I'll look at them." She threw the reins over the footboard and caught hold of the bar. As her foot reached the step, she looked over the heads of the two negro women. She stopped there, her hand tightening on the cool bar. Behind them in a declivity lay a dead mule. In its side was a neat square hole. Suddenly she jerked the whip out of the rack. The negro women scattered up.

"Don' spoil our meat pies, ma'am, foh the love of Jesus. It's bettuh than nothin' a-tall. White folks what eat of it don't know no difference."

She held the whip outthrust from her, ready to sweep the pies into the road.

"Please, ma'am, foh Gawd, people got to have meat, even old mule."

She looked at their scared faces and the meat pies. She climbed back into the buggy, grabbed up the reins, and laid the whip across the flanks of the dozing horse. He bucked into startled life, neighed shrilly, and started plunging down the road. She bounced on the seat of the buggy. When the grade steepened he slowed to a walk. Mildred replaced the whip. She sat very still. At the top of the hill on Williamsburg Road, big Napoleons glinted dully in their gulleys behind high mounds of earth. Locals had manned them when she passed here before. Now the Locals were at the second lines.

She jogged the horse. There was a long way yet to go and she had to find Brose. There would surely be soldiers who could direct her to side roads leading to the brigades from Pickett's division. Maybe she would see "Old Pete" himself. Uncle Virginius Kirby had told her that Longstreet was in command north of the river since he had partially recovered from his Wilderness wound. It would fill her with pride to ask for "Captain Kirby." The pride which her marriage should have given her had been denied. So

much of the pride in their marriage had been denied them. So much they had n't shared. Yet it was something that she could not define that their love had missed, since the day her words had driven him away.

Right before her, on either side of the road, earth breastworks rose in a slope from the ground, and, in one place, to a peak. Sloping at angles behind the high rise, two mounds of earth formed a gun embrasure. When she had driven this road before, soldiers manned those lines. Brose had told them Lee was marching north, and their high, singing cheers had followed her. Now the remnants of the Locals lay behind the breastworks, somewhere off in the woods, their lines too thin to stretch to the road. She knew a small cavalry brigade patrolled the roads.

The woods ended and a harvested wheat field stretched toward the horizon. A white-painted house on a knoll nestled under a circular grove of trees. The memory swept over her. It was near here they had stopped. It was near here she had known the fullness of desire, like the lush ripeness of the fields on that summer morning. That seemed long ago. That, she knew suddenly, was what was lost between them. Since the day he had left her, the passion in their love had gone too. There had been something of this autumn in it, something of the grimness of the city itself. Now she knew what was missing, what she would try to recapture when she saw him.

Woods walled the road again and laid jagged shadows across the dirt. The sun had passed high noon. She had driven more slowly than Brose. Along these woods ran the abandoned line. Her breath came faster. A reflection of the remembered glow touched her and her body softened. She felt, close and illusory, a suggestion of the lost mood. Almost his hands were on her flesh, almost his voice throbbed through her.

She saw the gap in the trees and jerked the horse to a halt. The earth mound rose, covered now with brown pine tags. Before, they had been green. She stepped down from the buggy and she trembled a little. Her senses quickened. There was the poke-

berry bush. She rustled through the dry leaves. There was the tall tree! It marked the spot where his friend had been killed. Now it marked the spot where she had lain that long-ago summer day, when she felt the gray lines marching through her with red banners and blaring bugles.

She moved to the breastwork. Behind it the ground had been washed away. Something was there. She went rigid. A shoe protruded among the leaves. Behind the shoe rags fell away from bleached bones. A brass buckle was covered with earth, a leather belt lay flat on the rag-covered skeleton, a canteen was near the bony fingers. Her eyes could not move away. She stared at the buttons on the rotted coat, her gaze traveling up them, one by one, until she saw the skull, the black sockets, the gleaming teeth. Beside it lay a rusty bayonet, mouldy brown. Her hands closed over her mouth.

She did n't know she had uttered a sound, but a scream echoed through the woods. Then, as she stood there, the echo came again. It rose in the distance, not an echo. It swelled and rushed toward her like a wind. Then a shot crackled and ground vibrated with the thunder of galloping hoofs.

She ran blindly toward the road. The high crackle of shots ran with her. The balls sounded like hail in the trees. The thunder of the horses rolled as if they were rushing over her. She stumbled out on the road. The horse was backing against the buggy, throwing up his head, wall-eyed with terror. She reached for the reins sliding off the footboard. The wheel scraped against her dress. She grabbed the reins and slapped him with them. He stopped backing, tried to lunge. She hung on the bit and jerked back. She tried to speak soothing words. But they stumbled out, broken and shaky, and her own panic was transmitted through the reins. He started to plunge, fighting the bit, blowing out his lips in a shrill whinny. Mildred was jerked almost off her feet. She dug her feet into the dirt. He pulled her forward, staggering. Desperately she pulled on the right rein, turning him into the woods.

He went straight for the trees, unseeing. Another horse pushed

through and collided with him. The shock yanked the reins out of her hands. The hub of the wheel cut her thigh and she hardly felt it. A ragged gray soldier with a scraggly beard had her horse by the bridle, holding him quiet. He looked down at her out of wide blue eyes.

"Great Gawd, lady, what you doin' heah?"

She moved weakly toward the buggy step, picked up the reins. "I'm looking for Terry's brigade of Pickett—"

"They've gone back across the river, lady. Git in yoh buggy. I'll hold yoh hawss. We're bein' attacked."

She looked at him, uncomprehending. "Gone back? Who're you?"

"I'm with Gary's Cavalry Brigade. Please, ma'am, git in this yere buggy. Don' you heah the Yanks comin'?"

The woods rattled with musket fire and shrieked with the high yell of the men. Somehow her panic was gone. She only knew that she was very tired and that she didn't care. She climbed slowly into the buggy. The soldier rode out into the road, pulling the horse around. Down the road she saw a solid wall of men in blue moving forward. The sun gleamed on muskets and then puffs of smoke drifted out from them. Bullets whined.

The soldier wasn't holding her bridle any more. His horse cantered toward the Yankees, the stirrups flapping. Her horse faced the woods, the buggy crosswise in the road. Other ragged horsemen plunged across the road and shut off the blue wall. *Behind these breastworks . . .* She saw big blue pistols kick in their hands. One horseman jerked and sprawled over his pommel. His bony beast galloped back into the woods. *Hold the bastards here . . . Fields is comin' . . .* They swarmed off their horses, tossing the reins over branches. Short carbines pushed over the brown pine tags on the mounds and cracked. *We can't hold 'em, sergeant . . . Th' hell . . . Fields is comin' . . .* In the road horses churned. Lead sprayed the woods. Hoarse shouts rose with the crackle. *Christ, that's a lady in that buggy . . .*

Mildred felt the reins limp in her hands, saw the horse shaking,

partially quieted by the other animals. *Foh Gawd, ma'am . . .* She took a grip on the reins with icy fingers, tried to ease the horse around. He moved slowly, clumsily.

From off in the woods where the first shouts had come, a high-pitched, long-drawn scream wailed. It coursed through her, tingled in her fingers. The crackling deepened, a growl in it now. *Heah's Fields . . . Yee-owee. . . .* She saw into the woods, where she had stood over the abandoned breastworks. She saw the tall tree under which she had taken his love at high noon.

Through the trees now plunged a pack of hairy, tattered, bearded savages, their throats opened in a fighting scream. Their eyes blazed and hats flopped over their blackened faces. Tangled hair reached through holes in their hats and fell around their ears. Faded gray and butternut brown were rent and ripped and ragged. Black pants and brown pants and any pants were kneeless and raveled at the bottom. Shoes were broken and soleless, and brown, bloody feet without shoes trampled the pine tags. Strings and cords around their shoulders held flapping canteens and flat haversacks. In each hand was a shining rifle. In each face was a haggard fury. Dear God, was this Lee's peerless Army of Northern Virginia? Was Brose one of those screaming savages?

Somehow she shook the reins. The horse broke ahead and the buggy careened down the road. Behind her the battle howled. Another attack on Richmond was being repelled; another move of Grant's was being made to weaken the thin lines in front of Petersburg; another effort being made to reduce those ranks so low that for once a successful attack could be launched against Lee's army. All at once, Mildred understood what Brose was fighting for. It was not because he believed the Confederacy would win its independence. It had nothing to do with the Confederacy. He was fighting like those yelling ragamuffins back there were fighting, because he would not be defeated.

The Williamsburg Road curved and far ahead she saw a thin cloud of dust. The horse trotted on, panting, but his gait even. He was leaving his terror with the sound. Nearer the dust she saw

lines of four men abreast, reaching back to the horizon. They hurried. They hurried without rhythm. They strained and almost stumbled. There was no fury on them, rushing forward. There was only desperation and anxiety.

Closer, she saw the white in their hair and their beards. Beside them walked a straighter man than any of them, and only one arm swung by his side. Behind the column of men a red flag waved in the October breeze. Under it the apple cheeks of boys shone in the afternoon sun. Dennis's reserves.

They, too, knew that the Confederacy was falling, that Atlanta was gone, and Sherman marching across Georgia to divide the eastern part of their country; that their whole country was split and swarming with enemies; that Virginia was cut into pieces and trampled on; that Richmond was being ringed around and isolated; that no more men filled the ranks of those lost. It was something more than their state and country, than their homes. It was something imponderable that flowed through the army. It was the spirit that had flamed in the cold-eyed Jackson, with his long marches and fury in attack; in the golden-voiced Stuart with the sunlit beard and yellow sash, with his raids and singing charges; in the boy Pelham, the horse cannoneer with his old man's eyes; in the Prussian von Borcke with his long sword; in sad-eyed Albert Sidney Johnston bleeding to death on Shiloh's field; in Rodes and Maxcy Gregg; in fair-haired Farley, Stuart's volunteer aide; in Garnett and Armistead, dying at the mouths of Gettysburg's guns. It was the spirit that still flared in burly Longstreet, with his right arm useless; in laughing Fitz Lee, lying wounded; in the blond-bearded Hood with his wooden leg, and his army shattered; in the cursing Early with his army scattered down the Valley Pike. It was the spirit of them all, dead and living, epitomized in Lee, the Old Man of the Army of Northern Virginia. And this spirit flowed into the army and into Brose.

That was the spirit in him that had changed the mood of their love. It was nothing she had said or done. It was only her guilt that made her think so. Their love, that had burned bright when

the war burned, now burned with a dull glow as the war did for them. She had thought their love seemed grim, like the city. It was grim, as the war had become. But to understand that was to share in their love everything of themselves, as they had always shared. And if the color of their mood had changed, that she could stand. The mood itself would never die. There was nothing missing from their love. Nothing would ever be missing from it. Knowing that, she could endure the siege in Richmond as well as he could in the lines.

The old men looked into the buggy and cheered as she rode by.

CHAPTER XXX

"I, A. Lincoln, President of the United States of America, in order to supply the aforesaid deficiency, and to provide for casualties in the military and naval services of the United States, do issue this my call for 300,000 volunteers to serve for one, two or three years."—*Richmond Examiner*, December 26, 1864

The paint sizzled on the burning window blinds and a sickening smell drifted into the room.

"Pugh." Granny made a face and huddled closer in her blanket.

"That's all right," Elizabeth said. "It's catching."

The tongues of flame licked along the green blinds and started to burn steadily on the open shutters. Elizabeth put another blind on. "Now, if they would only come."

"Your ma better come soon," Granny grumbled. "It's high time for me to go to bed. Ain't no sense in her and Marie traipsing down in those railroad yards, anyhow, just so your young man can warm himself. He can stand the cold's well as we can."

"I can't go to bed with him, Granny, the way you do with Mother."

"You could if you'd get married. All this talk about waiting until we win. Like I told you all along, we ain't never goin' to win. Bad times now; worse coming."

Elizabeth was watching the second blind catch. "I'd like to get married now, Granny. It's Chester. He's an aide now on General Wade Hampton's staff and his work is dangerous. He does n't think it's fair for me to be his wife until peace."

"Fair your hind foot. It ain't fair for your mother to go down

in those yards at night picking up pieces of coal slag dropped from trains. No telling what might happen to her — ”

“I know, Granny. I wanted to go. I did n’t want her to. But Mother’s been different since — since Papa died.”

“It’s her conscience botherin’ her, I reckon. She never knew how much she loved Charles till he was gone. He was a fine man, your father was, and — ”

“Sh-h. There they come.”

“Put that other blind on there. Ain’t that the last one we got?”

Elizabeth nodded. She carefully placed the blind on and ran to open the door to the hall. Mrs. Kirby and Marie, bent over, blankets covering their heads like shrouds, staggered into the dining room, holding pieces of coal in their aprons. They both dropped it on the hearth and held their hands over the sizzling blaze. Black woman and white, their lips were purple, their teeth were chattering, and in their eyes was a glazed expression of frozen pain.

“Oh, Mother!” Elizabeth took the shaking hands and chafed them. “You and Marie should n’t — ”

“Hush, child. You’re tired from the arsenal. Is n’t it time for Chester to be here?”

“Yes’m.”

Granny snorted. “It’s time for me to be in bed, Judy, that’s where you’ll get warm. But the Lord help me when your cold guffins touch my legs.”

“You put the coal on, child,” Mrs. Kirby said. “I’m getting warm now. How are you, Marie?”

“I don’t like to think on it, Miss Judy. Foh Gawd, I thought we’d never find no coal to-night. Lot of men prowlin’ too, drat their poh-white hides.”

“Well, see if you can’t get warm in bed, Marie. I’m going on now. Come on, Mamma.”

The old lady pulled herself up, shaking. Mrs. Kirby, after holding her hands over the flames a moment, helped her mother up. They went out together, both wrapped in their blankets.

"It sho ain't right for the Lawd to make an old lady like yoh Granny walk through a cold house like this. You reckon we ever go' open the front rooms again, chile? I'm sho tired of the family bein' in this yere dinin' room all the time . . . what's left of the family."

Elizabeth shook her head. The flames were dying down on the blinds and the coal slag was smoking, with thin blue flames wavering through the black smoke. The coal seemed to make the burning paint smell thicker and heavier in the room. But she was getting warm. She took off her blanket and folded it and laid it over the back of a straight chair. The dining table was pushed back against the wall, now that there were only three of them for meals, and the sitting-room sofa had been moved in, in front of the fire, with Granny's rocker on one side and a wing chair on the other. Elizabeth stood there, looking at the table, and remembering. . . . Christmas of '62 they had thought it terrible that Paul could n't get home and they had sent him a fine box. Would any of them have believed that two years later Christmas would pass with just her and Mother and Granny here? That Papa would not be with them, ever again, with his kind face and his sweet smile that had grown so tired?

"Chile," Marie said. Elizabeth started and looked at the negro. "Do this yere talk about gold bein' worth sixty times as much as one shin-plaster mean that one dollah of real money is worth sixty dollahs of ours?"

"I think so, Marie."

"Then I found out a way foh you-all to git rich. I'm worth sixty thousand dollahs in Confed'rate money. You-all can sell me and —"

"Oh, Marie, you know we never owned you, and we would n't sell you if we did."

Marie stared at her a minute. "Anyway, I belong heah and I'm worth sixty thousand dollahs. I bet Mistuh Charles never knew that."

Elizabeth heard steps on the porch. "Will you let Mr. Chester in, Marie?"

"Oh, Lawd, that means I got to go to bed. That corn-shuck mattress same like a block of ice." She waddled out of the room, huddled under her hooded blanket. A chill blast knifed through the room when the door fanned open.

Then Elizabeth heard his voice and hurried to open the door. She looked at him a moment and went straight into his arms. He held her a long time. She could hear the beat of his heart.

"You don't know," she whispered, "you don't know how I love to feel your arms about me."

He held her closer. "I know how I love to have them about you. Sometimes I feel I can't wait any longer to have you there always."

"Don't let's wait, Chester!" She lifted her head quickly. He was looking beyond her, grave and troubled as he so often was. "Please don't let's wait any longer. I know you don't think it's fair, but it would be. I swear to you it would be. I—I'm miserable this way."

His gaze lowered to her. "Are you, Elizabeth?"

"Yes, I am. You don't know. I've tried to be brave and I've tried to do what you thought was right. But since Papa died, I—I just don't seem able to bear it by myself any longer."

All at once he seemed very weary and she wondered if her words had laid her burden on him. "Let's talk about it," he said. "Let's go over and sit by the fire and talk about it."

"Oh, I never thought. You must be frozen through."

"It is bitter out to-night." He held his arm around her and they sat on the sofa, close to the hearth. The slag was burning with a steady low fire. He did not unbutton his overcoat. His gauntlets were thrust through his belt. He was silent in such a way that she knew she should n't speak. She glanced at the lines in his weather-hardened face. They seemed to blot out all the youth and eagerness. Suddenly he turned toward her. Excitement fluttered through her and she felt she was on the verge of being taken into an important confidence.

"You see, Elizabeth, I'm afraid Richmond will have to be evacuated."

"No!" Whatever she had prepared for, it was n't that. "Why, it could n't be, after all these years, after all we've gone through. . . ."

He nodded. "We just had news that Savannah has fallen. That means Sherman has divided Georgia in half and now he'll start marching northward. There's only a small force in his way. Within a few months he'll be at us from due south. Grant and Butler and the Yankee gunboats have us hemmed in over the whole east, and of course north of Richmond is their territory. When Sherman comes we'll be almost surrounded. As I see it, then it would just be a matter of time before we'd be closed in."

"But why will you evacuate Richmond?"

"Elizabeth, we can't defend a city if we're shut up in it. We have to have mobility of action against their larger forces and we have to be able to get supplies."

"But how can you get supplies out of Richmond? At the arsenal they say we're practically the only place making munitions. What would you do without those?"

"We'll have to take all they've made and pile them in wagons, I reckon. For the future . . . I don't know. Right now everything depends on how long we can hold Petersburg. If that falls it won't matter whether Sherman gets here or not—all the railroads going south will be cut off and we'll be isolated."

"But, Chester . . ." Suddenly everything that formed her life dropped away and she faced, alone, an empty and terrifying future. "Then the Yankees will be here and—and we could never be together any more . . ."

"Yes, that's what I've been thinking."

"Oh, don't you see, that's why I need you now, Chester. If I was your wife—"

His arm moved her close against him and his hand reached down and took hers. "You know I'd rather have you as my wife than anything in the world. But to think of you here, with Yankees in the city, and me off God knows where, maybe an outlaw—"

"But that can't happen right away. You said it would n't unless Petersburg fell."

"Petersburg is bound to fall. Our line is stretched too thin now."

"But it won't be to-morrow."

He smiled sadly. "No, it won't be for some time. We could n't move now in these roads, with our poor horses."

"Then we have time to be married. It would n't be so bad being here with the Yankees—as your wife. Then, no matter where you were or what you were doing, I'd feel safe because I'd know I was yours. But without you I—I don't know!"

His hand left hers and swept her to him. She was crushed against his chest, her head strained back. But, oh, it was so beautiful to have him like this. His lips came down. When they lifted they were not grim any more. They looked young and eager again.

"Let's get married whenever you say!" He was smiling and his face was all bright, as on that long-ago spring before he went away.

"To-morrow!"

He laughed. They laughed together, and it was a sound that had not been heard for a long time in that house. She reached up for his lips again.

CHAPTER XXXI

"The choice between war and abject submission is before us. To such a proposal, brave men, with arms in their hands, can have but one answer. They cannot barter manhood for peace, nor the right of self-government for life or property. Taking new resolution from the fate which our enemies intend for us, let every man devote all his energies to the common defense."
— *General Lee in Order No. 2, February 11, 1865*

"Mildred, what would you say to selling our wedding dress?"

Mildred looked up quickly from the bowl of chimney soot with which she was mixing water. Her mother was watching her with an expression of childlike pleasure. She was leaning back in her wing chair, for all the world like a little old lady, with her hands folded over the ends of the shawl that crossed in front of her waist. The rain beating against the windowpanes gave the living room an atmosphere of tranquil security, and those words in this peaceful scene rang with a sense of unreality.

"But, Mother, surely we're not reduced to that."

Mrs. Wade nodded brightly. "I did n't tell you about my shopping trip to-day. I took that last forty dollars we had from the flannel gloves we sold and tried to buy some clothes for your husband. All I was offered for the money was a secondhand shirt. But I met Mr. Virginus Kirby and he told me he could buy for me, through the quartermaster, some cadet cloth for a hundred and fifty dollars and an army tailor would make it up for another hundred. That would be as good as a five-hundred-dollar suit. So I've been sitting here thinking what we could sell that would bring us two hundred and fifty dollars."

"Oh, Mother, that 's lovely of you, but I can't let you make such a sacrifice for Brose."

"Such a sacrifice now would make me happy." Isobel Wade smiled sweetly. "You don't understand that all the life I have now is in you young people, and the soldiers. And when he's *my* young person *and* a soldier —"

"Mother! Young people? Why, you're — you're —" But what was she?

"Never you mind about me." She sounded like Aunt Abbie, or herself playing at being Aunt Abbie. "My life is over except for my children. I was almost a grandmother and will be one, I know. The more I can do for them the more they'll forgive me for being so mean at first and not understanding."

Mildred stared at her mother. "All right," she said slowly. "He needs clothes badly and he has n't been paid since summer."

"Then it's all settled. I'll go upstairs presently and get it out of the trunk. It was a beautiful dress, was n't it?"

"Yes, Mother." She looked down at the watered soot and mechanically stirred it, adding a few drops of vinegar.

"You remember old Judge Hamilton, don't you, Mildred? Well, when I was downtown to-day I was looking at a barrel of flour marked one thousand dollars and wondering how anyone could buy foods the way prices have gone up since the blockade has been shut down at Wilmington, when who should come up but the Judge, carrying a large market basket. He's a great wit, you know, so I twitted him about being a speculator if he expected to fill that basket with food. He said the basket was what he'd brought the money in; the food was in his purse. I had a good laugh and forgot our troubles for a while."

"We could all do with more laughter." Mildred thought of the old reckless laugh of Brose, the careless grin that showed his crooked teeth. It had been a long time since she had seen that, a long time since it had been suggested in his letters.

"I reckon we'll be having less, too, since the fall of Fort Fisher opened the Yankees' way to Wilmington. The speculators will

shoot things sky high now. I don't know how the poor people will last through this winter. The Lord only knows what we'd do without the rent on the warehouse, though sometimes I think I'd rather starve than take the money from that Milton Duke. He's grown fat off our troubles. There's nothing left to look forward to but peace."

"I heard at the hospital to-day that the peace conference failed. Mr. Lincoln told our commissioners, they said, that all the armies must surrender and the emancipation of our slaves must be accepted as a law."

"I never had any hopes of that conference. Your father always said the Yankees hated us. They won't give us peace until they've got us under their heel. But I do think St. George is right in insisting that we'll have to give up sooner or later and it might as well be now, before we lose more of our men."

Mildred looked up from her finished mixture. Her mother talked of "our men" as though they were some anonymous people. In her resignation, she was removed from any personal feeling or understanding of it in others. Her resignation now had built for her another protected world, and all that she did for Brose and the soldiers, even her willingness to sell the wedding dress, formed for her another rôle at which she played in her new security, just as in her old world she had played at romance. Until the day she died, Isobel Wade would be a child who once, briefly, had faced reality and fled from it into the sanctuary of premature old age. Mildred stood up abruptly.

"I'm going down to get some paper." The icy dampness of the hall chilled her through and she hurried down the winding stairs, clinging to the balustrade in the dim light of the one candle in the lower hall. She opened the high white door into the reception room. Its cold musty air was like a tomb. She moved along the wall by touch until she felt the bare plaster. On one side a strip of the wallpaper was loose. She carefully pulled it down, measured it against her arm, and tore it off. Her teeth chattered as she left the vast blackness of the disused room, and she ran from it up the

stairs. She quietly shut the door to the living room and went over to the fire.

Her mother looked up at her with her unreal cheerfulness. "You know, I was thinking about that General Hood, what a handsome man he was. I thought he was such a fine soldier. How do you suppose he happened to handle his army so badly out there in Tennessee? I understand it's completely wrecked and he's resigned."

"Brose said the job was too big for General Hood. He was a brilliant brigadier and a good enough division commander, but he just was n't equipped to command an army. He was only a lieutenant, you know, in the United States Army."

"Yes, but so was Jeb Stuart."

"Well, Jeb Stuart was — Jeb Stuart."

Isobel Wade shook her head. "I suppose they'll blame the President for appointing Hood, too. Poor man, he has hardly a friend. Even Congress attacks him. I wonder whom they'll blame for the army failures now that General Lee's to be appointed Commander in Chief."

"Oh, it's too late now for General Lee to do anything. He should have been appointed two years ago."

"If you ask me, it's too late for anybody to do anything. Everybody I talk to is sick of it and longs for peace. You know we're lost when they talk of putting negroes in the army. I don't know what they keep fighting for, except to keep a country for Mr. Davis."

"The fighting has nothing to do with Mr. Davis. They're fighting just because they won't be defeated, that's all. I don't think even Brose has any hope."

"Then, if he has n't any hope, I certainly think he should be here with you instead of exposing himself out there and ruining his health."

"Oh, Mother!" She stopped herself. "I'll write him now." She moved across to the chilly corner where the desk was, and smoothed out the wallpaper. She stirred the soot ink.

"I reckon I'll go up and get the wedding dress." Her mother drew her shawl about her and went out.

Mildred dipped the pen in the sooty liquid.

"My darling, I am here alone in the room where I first met you and across the street they're singing the song I heard the night we met in front of Centenary Church." *A hundred months have passed, Lorena, since last I held that hand in mine . . .* "I have been longing for you to hold me again in your arms as you did that night, and kiss me as you did then. Sometimes here with Mother and Aunt Abbie and Cousin Flora, everything has changed so that I am afraid that you might have changed too." *A hundred months—'t was flowery May, when up the hilly slope we climbed . . .* "Tonight, hearing that sweet old song has brought everything back to me so clearly, and I know that it will all come again. I don't want you to think I've lost hope, as I seemed to when I was ill, or that I want you to do anything but fight on until we win, but I pray for the day when we shall have peace and you will be with me once more as you used to be." *To watch the dying of the day, and hear the distant church bells chime . . .* "Know that my heart is with you in your struggles, and I would not have you do anything but fight, but that will make it all the sweeter when we can be really married, live really as husband and wife, as we never have, and you will be my black 'un all the time and forever."

Isobel Wade came into the room, laughing gayly. Mildred turned and saw the ivory wedding gown held up against her mother, the Brussels lace ruffled around her old lady's face.

"Is n't it beautiful, Mildred?"

"Yes, Mother," she said steadily. "It's very beautiful."

CHAPTER XXXII

"The loss of Richmond would be the loss of all respect and authority toward the Confederate government. . . . Each contestant in the war has made Richmond the central object of all its plans and all its exertions. It has become the symbol of the Confederacy. Its loss would be material ruin to the cause. . . ." — *Richmond Examiner*

Elizabeth put the pieces of the broken-up table on the hearth. "Now," she said to Granny, "all you have to do is keep the fire high until I come back."

Granny moved her rocker closer to the fire. "You certainly look happy about it. Anybody'd think you were glad Chester is wounded, 'stead of worryin' about how you go' keep a wounded husband warm with nothing to burn but furniture."

"I am glad! I don't care if we burn everything in the house. Think of it, Granny, we'll be together for the first time since we've known each other. I can take care of him and get him well. You be sure and have everything nice when we get back. I've got to hurry to meet Mildred."

She ran out of the room before the old lady could answer and hurried out the front door. The March wind felt good. It was n't as cold as in the house. She turned the corner into Franklin Street.

At Fifth, she had to stop for a regiment of cavalry to pass. The men, huddled under overcoats and blankets and sacks and pieces of carpet, slumped on their bony horses. The beasts drooped like the men. Their shanks were plastered to the hocks in spring mud, and red-clay mud was caked in the cavities of their ribs. Their heads hung forward. Many of the saddle flaps bore the faded letters "U S A." Elizabeth remembered early spring days of years ago

when the cavalry rode singing past and when sidewalks were lined with cheering people.

A guilty joy filled her. She was happy that Chester, who had ridden with Jeb Stuart in those other days, was not one of these slouching men. There was no singing in them now, swaying like sacks in the saddles. There were only auction flags fluttering for them, of homes for sale, and only the wounded soldiers stopped to give them more than a glance. Chester used to tell her how the infantry shouted jibes at the cavalry. *Come outa them boots. . . . We know you in theah 'cause we cain see yoh ears flappin'.* . . . Now the foot soldiers only stared with expressions sad to see. The last of the horsemen passed and she hurried down the street. She would keep Chester in a soft bed and nurse him, and maybe by the time he was well there would be peace.

Mildred was standing on the iron balcony in front of her square gray house, just as she had that first afternoon Elizabeth met her. And just as on that long-ago spring afternoon, when she descended the curved steps, Elizabeth felt a quiver of nervous fear. Even though she was married to Chester, who was of the Wade world, Elizabeth could not feel that she belonged with this lovely girl walking toward her with that suggestion of arrogance. Her full, expectant mouth and her smoky gray eyes disturbed Elizabeth as they used to. She seemed to be thinking or feeling something that was hidden from the rest of them. And even now, in her worn cloak and made-over bonnet, she had a color, dark gold like her hair, that you had never seen before; she had a radiance, too, that belonged to a world Elizabeth had never known. Elizabeth had to think that, after all, Mildred was Mrs. Kirby, her sister-in-law. Then Mildred was at the gate, smiling, the light glowing behind her eyes, and Elizabeth knew only a rush of warmth for her, a sense of eagerness at being near her.

"I'm so sorry, Elizabeth," she said. "I can't get the buggy after all. The poor horse is sick. But I thought we might go to the War Office and see your Uncle Virginus. He might get us something, or we might see someone we know."

Elizabeth impulsively linked her arm in Mildred's. "I don't mind about the buggy. I want to be with you."

Mildred glanced at her with a slight smile. "You're very happy, aren't you?"

"Oh, you don't know! I only wish Brose were coming for you — and Paul too. It's all over, don't you think so?"

"I wish it were."

Elizabeth felt that Mildred was thinking of Brose, and she wanted to comfort her. "Well, with Wilmington gone, we just can't hold out without a seaport. Even Uncle Virginius admits that Sherman'll just march on until he joins Grant. Chester talked of them evacuating Richmond when that happens, but, shucks, they can't fight without supplies."

"They've done it a long time."

"On a little, yes, but never on none." She was anxious that Mildred should feel as she did. "Everybody says now they're bound to give up soon."

"Everybody but the soldiers who haven't deserted." Mildred gave her a sudden steady look. "Does Chester know you want peace like this?"

"Oh, no, of course not, but I've asked him questions and learned a lot more from him than he thinks. I've thought it out, too, that even General Lee can't hold against *three* armies."

Mildred nodded, but she did n't seem to feel about it as Elizabeth did. "I've had it reasoned out too," she said slowly, "but they keep on."

They reached Ninth Street, and in Capitol Square Elizabeth saw uniformed negroes formed in companies.

"Look, Mildred," she cried, "when they put negroes in the army, you know we won't last long. It was bad enough when we had them working on fortifications and such."

Mildred glanced toward the Square and said nothing. Then they reached Mechanics' Hall, and Elizabeth took a tighter hold on Mildred's arm. The usual clot of men thronged the dark hall, talking in low voices, as though they were evil conspirators. They

stared at the girls. Elizabeth did n't feel so shy, being with Mildred. They turned into the end office. No one was there but Uncle Virginus. He did n't glance up from his desk when they entered. Elizabeth hesitated a moment. The room was chilly and he wore a shawl pulled around his shoulders. Flesh sagged on his grayed face as he bent over a sheet of buff Confederate paper, a bitten stub of pencil in his fingers.

"Uncle Virginus."

Barely tilting his head upward, his bitter eyes stared at them from under his drawn brows. His mouth hung slack, like an ill person's. Slowly he forced his body back in his chair and his lips clamped together.

"Oh . . . howdo, Elizabeth. How are you, Mildred? Forgive my not standing. I'm tired unto death."

"Are you sick, Uncle Virginus?"

"My soul is sick."

Elizabeth did n't know what to say. She was embarrassed at the way he talked and she wished Mildred would say something. He pointed to a pile of wooden boxes along the wall.

"See those? They're our archives, our records. We're moving them—to Danville. You know what that means?"

"The government is going to evacuate," she said hesitantly.

"Yes! Now all you croakers will be satisfied. Lee is going to move as soon as the roads are in condition for his poor beasts to haul his wagons and guns."

Conscious of Mildred beside her, Elizabeth felt a coldness around her heart. "You mean they're to keep on fighting?" she cried out.

"Of course they're going to keep on fighting!" His voice rose as though he were in a rage. "Lee will join Johnston and combined they'll rout Sherman. Then they'll turn on Grant and give him a battle in the open, where our lines are not stretched over thirty miles."

Elizabeth was shocked by his outburst. In her silence, she heard Mildred, cool, almost arrogant.

"Do you actually believe there is hope in such a plan?"

"Do I actually believe?" His mouth worked on unsaid words. Then his head fell forward and his veined hands trembled upward to cover his face. "No." His low voice came muffled through his hands. "When Richmond falls, it is the end."

Elizabeth could only stare, paralyzed by horror. She heard Mildred's quiet voice. "I'm sorry, Mr. Kirby." He nodded and his hands locked over his face. Mildred took her arm and she backed out, still looking at the old man. Then she lowered her face so no one could see and hurried down the long hall. On the street, she gave way.

"Oh . . . was n't it . . . awful . . . He seemed to be in a trance . . ."

"All the die-hards are in a trance."

The cold intensity in Mildred's voice steadied her. The tears, that she had fought back, did not come. They walked up Main to the Spotswood Hotel and turned down Seventh Street hill. At the Basin, she heard the bellows of the muleteers on the banks, whipping the beasts that tugged the boats toward the canal. They passed over the drawbridge, and down at the foot of the hill she saw the abandoned tobacco warehouses which the arsenal used.

"Oh, I'm so glad I don't have to go to work there any more," she cried. Her spirit lifted. "Chester is going to get three months of back pay, as a lieutenant colonel, and that comes to over five hundred dollars. Of course, that won't amount to much over five dollars, but it'll buy us something to eat and I think I'll do him more good nursing than I would by bringing in my puny salary."

"Be with him if you have to starve."

"I'm so glad you think that too. You know, I should n't tell this, but some of the girls at the arsenal struck last month. Those who don't live at home just can't eat off their little pay. Colonel Broun pacified them with some bacon he'd gotten off a blockade runner, but I don't know what he'll do next time, now that we have n't any more open ports. Anyway, I don't see how they can run the arsenal much longer. I know we've been depending on stills and

junk for copper for the past year and there just isn't any more. You can't make caps without copper."

"I don't know, but they'll probably find some way to go on."

But Elizabeth forgot everything then, as they reached the brick depot of the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad. Stuffy air enveloped them as they entered the dingy waiting room, cloudy with smoke. Hardened soldiers, muddy and bearded, cluttered around the pot-bellied stove and stood in a line under the pipe that crossed the room to the wall. The pipe leaked smoke and the men puffed at pipes. She hung back before their bold gazes.

"You want me to ask?" Mildred whispered.

Elizabeth hesitated, tried to say no, then nodded. "Thank you."

Mildred walked toward them slowly, coolly looking them over until she recognized an officer. "We're looking for an officer who was coming over this morning on a train of wounded. Colonel Cary, aide of General Hampton's staff. Could you help us?"

Elizabeth wondered if she could ever be that assured. She marveled at the deference of all the men. The officer swept off his slouch hat and bowed.

"I'll be glad to help you find him, ma'am." He had a young voice. You could n't tell their ages any more from their old eyes and the ragged beards that covered their faces. "That train came in only a while ago. The wounded are out on the back platform. Will you follow me?"

Elizabeth hurried up and took Mildred's arm. The lean officer held the back door open to a blast of wind. It bit through her after the momentary warmth. It caught under her hoops and whirled her dress away from her legs. A wild yell whooped down the tracks. Startled, she saw a row of hairy faces under battered hats peering over the white fence at the end of the shed. The young officer flushed above his beard.

"I—I'll go and get him for you. That's the wounded, down yonder." He glanced anywhere but at them. "Ah, why don't you all protect yourselves from the wind . . . those boxes over there . . ." He saluted, turned, and hurried down the tracks toward the shed.

Clinging to Mildred's arm, Elizabeth moved behind the pile of

crates and freight boxes. The pile sheltered her body from the wind, but over the top she still saw the soldiers, crowding toward the fence and yelling.

"Look," Mildred said, "here's a clear space. Why don't we sit down? They'll stop if they don't see us."

She smiled up gratefully. "I would n't want to meet Chester in front of all them, carrying on like that." They squeezed between the small crates and perched on the narrow edge of a box. Their dresses tilted up and the wind whistled around their ankles, but there was nothing in front of them but the blank wall of the depot. The yelling had died down. "You don't reckon they'll carry on when I meet Chester?"

"No."

She was pleased that Chester would see her here with Mildred. Maybe after the war they would all be friends. She could learn a lot from Mildred, little things that would make Chester proud. It would be wonderful, too, to be at home in that beautiful Wade house and not feel as shy as she had before.

A shadow moved around the boxes and she jumped up. The officer was alone. He glanced from one of them to the other and he didn't seem friendly any more. She was aware of Mildred standing beside her. She felt that something was wrong and she tried to speak. The officer turned to Mildred.

"Did you say *Lieutenant* Colonel Cary?"

"Yes. This lady is Mrs. Cary. . . . What is it?"

The officer pulled his gaze toward her. He wet his lips. "There might be some mistake. . . . They seem to think that—that Lieutenant Colonel Cary. . . ." He faltered and his eyes shifted away, then fixed on something behind her.

She felt impelled to follow his gaze. He seemed to be staring at the narrow edge of the box they had sat on. On the side of the box she saw a chalk scrawl smudged where their skirts had rubbed against it. Then she noticed that the box was oblong, like so many she had seen being carted to the cemeteries. She swayed toward it. The scrawl loomed larger and larger. Her brain was filled with dancing letters. *Col C Cary . . . Staff Gen W Hampton. . . .*

CHAPTER XXXIII

"This is a sad business . . . it has happened as I told them it would at Richmond. The line has been stretched until it has broken." — *General Lee to his staff during the assault of the United States Army on his Petersburg front, April 2, 1865*

It was a bright blue morning, such as April brings to Virginia, when Mildred walked with Cousin Flora to church. Leaves were fresh on the trees and the air was sweet with linden blossoms. Yellow tulips and belled crocuses bordered the new grass and light green ivy trailed the brick garden walls. Flowers were bright too on the ladies' bonnets, camellias and half-opened roses. Mildred wondered if her apple blossoms — dyed feathers stuck in wax on the end of a wire — looked as natural as the others, made in the same way. Some ladies wore iridescent cocks' plumes and a few wore gloves. She glanced at her bare hands. She had felt naked when first she appeared on the street without gloves. Now it seemed natural.

Beside her Cousin Flora, indifferent to the flour sack she wore as a shirtwaist, stared at the strollers with the same gusto with which she gulped in the spring air. "Your mother need n't have stayed at home with Aunt Abbie this morning. I've never seen a more peaceful Sunday, not even at Kensington, before the war."

"Mother likes to think herself as old as Aunt Abbie. Then she can stay at home, like an old lady, and not have to face the world."

Cousin Flora gave her a sharp, sidewise glance. "A lot goes on in that pretty little head of yours. I've thought your mother was playing ostrich, too. It would do her good to be out on a day like this. She stays in too much."

"We all stay in too much." The color of the crowds ran through her and awakened, half excitedly and half fearfully, a new sense of living. She had forgotten that Richmond streets could suggest pleasures and fine moments and expectations other than the consuming hope of peace.

"Poor thing, you're like a little shut-in." Cousin Flora chuckled deep in her throat. "Is all this life teeming too much for you?"

Mildred smiled spontaneously. "It's awesome."

They stepped off the curb in front of the men lounging on the verandah of the St. Clair Hotel. Cousin Flora waddled across the street on her thin ankles and tiny feet. "It's those devils on that porch that frighten me. If we had them all in the army, we would n't have to hide behind bolted doors all the time."

They stepped up on the sidewalk in front of St. Paul's. Mildred paused. "Don't let's think of the army now. Look at the couples strolling through Capitol Square. It looks like peacetime. Things can't be as bad as we feared during the winter."

"Of course they're not. I tell you, freezing near to death makes everything look awful black." She tugged at Mildred's arm. "But come on into church and don't be eating your heart out looking at those young couples and thinking of that husband of yours. We'll pray that it'll soon be like this all the time. Besides, I've got to sit down. My poor feet are nigh killing me."

Old friends were gathered on the broad stone steps and between the thick pillars. With them the young officers, in cleaned and neatly patched gray uniforms, were the sort of men who had formed her old world. Entering the wide doors into the silence of the church, Mildred wondered if ever again she would have anything to talk about with those girls and young men. Now they seemed associated with some vaguely remembered dead life.

She and Cousin Flora were ushered into their pew. Around her were the ladies and gentlemen who ruled Richmond, its society and government; who perpetuated its traditions and established its customs; whom she would never again know as intimates.

The whispering ceased. The choir came singing down the aisle.

She closed her eyes and let their voices throb through her. The exaltation of the hymn was like her love when it had been released and soaring. But there had been violence in her love, a strange thing to touch her. There it was and she could do nothing about it. And there too was what had changed her, and what she longed for now.

As the service progressed and Dr. Minnegerode began his sermon, the peace of the church, the comfortable presence of familiar people, the memory of the bright blue morning, brought her longing closer to the surface than it had been in a long time. During the winter she had not dared dream and the burden of living had crushed her desires. Now those dreams crept close and warm, and slowly she captured the remembered mood of their love.

Suddenly she was aware that Dr. Minnegerode had broken off. Her senses slowly adjusted to the congregation, as though she were awakening from a dream. There was a curious hushed silence in the church. Everyone stared toward President Davis. Then she saw the sexton bending over him. Pompous in his brass-buttoned blue suit, the sexton handed the President a note. As Mr. Davis read it, his thin, pale lips tightened. He stood up. His pallid, hollow-cheeked face was set. His sunken eyes seemed sightless. Then he straightened his shoulders and marched down the aisle as erect as a soldier.

Cousin Flora turned to her and Mildred had never seen her frightened before. Her fat face was swelled like a balloon. "What is it?" Mildred shook her head. The same whisper rustled over the church, the same question was in each pair of widened eyes.

Dr. Minnegerode raised his mild voice. It was time for Communion. The small man was visibly excited, for he was flushed and his German accent thickened. The congregation settled back, but Mildred felt their tension. No sooner had the whisper died down than it swelled, louder than before, like wind rustling through corn shucks. Cousin Flora jumped. The sexton was approaching again. He swelled with self-importance in his ruffled shirt bosom and cuffs. He was conscious of everyone's attention as he bent

beside General Anderson. The soldier glanced once at a note and came up out of his pew. He was down the aisle before Mildred saw his face.

Dr. Minnegerode was almost shouting. The whispering did not die. It sighed in frantic undertone to the rector's beseeching voice. "Mildred," Cousin Flora croaked, "if the Yankees are in Richmond, I don't know what I'll do. After standing the varmints at Kensington . . . Oh, Lord, here comes that sexton again."

Soldiers quietly arose and moved toward the rear. Several ladies, and then older gentlemen, followed them out. Feet scuffled in the balcony. Dr. Minnegerode hurried down to the chancel rail. He pleaded for silence.

"Mildred, let's get out of here. Come on. I know something's happened."

Moved by the older woman's fear, Mildred rose and stepped into the aisle. The rector's pleading voice pulled at her. She felt that she was deserting friends in a crisis. While she wavered, Cousin Flora squeezed her bulk through the pew opening. In that moment waves of the congregation swept out into the aisles. The rector's voice wailed through the noise. She and Cousin Flora were carried along by the swarming people. Their rush of undefined terror was communicated to her senses, quivered over her nerves. She was pushed through the doors. Cousin Flora trembled against her.

Broken crowds of Sunday-dressed men and women milled on the sidewalk. Their faces hung slack. Their eyes gazed blankly. A whispered monotone soughed through them. *What's the matter? . . . What is it? . . . What shall we do? . . .* Cousin Flora pulled her down the steps. Crowds choked the iron gates. Cousin Flora heaved through. Once she was on the sidewalk she stopped and stared at the people, who stared back at her.

"What'll we do, Mildred?" Her voice shook.

Mildred had never seen her like this before, not during any raid, not even the night Philip Parramore was killed in the parlor. Mildred tried to steady herself. But the words of the crowd kept

humming over her nerves. She noticed that men were hurrying down Ninth Street.

"They're going to the War Office." Cousin Flora had noticed too. "Oh, I know something dreadful has happened. Look! There goes Mr. Virginus Kirby. Maybe he could help us."

Mildred broke away from her and ran along between the iron fence and the milling, futile crowds. *What is it? . . . What'll we do? . . .* Mr. Kirby's gray, seamed face was distorted with a bitterness such as she had never seen on a human being before. She grasped at his arm. He paused. For a moment he just glared at her. Then he made a movement toward his beaver and his features moved in a grimace.

"Ah! We're being evacuated!"

She could only stare at him. The words numbed her.

"Yes, that's the way you'll all feel, you croakers for peace. You've got it now and you don't like it, do you?"

The man's excitement calmed her. "What happened, Mr. Kirby?" She spoke quietly and coldly.

"You're going to have your peace, that's what happened. *Lee's lines have broken at last.* While half the Confederate states governors revile the administration and Congress debates on what laws to enforce and whether or not to use negro troops, while you croakers —"

"In the name of God, can you tell me what happened? My husband is in those lines!"

"It was your husband's division that started it. All gobbled up at Five Forks, while the famous Pickett was off at a clambake. They were outnumbered ten to one, leaderless, and they were slaughtered, captured, and broken."

"No-o . . ."

He wet his gray lips. "I'm sorry. I don't know what's happened to Brose. No individual reports yet. But the whole army has been ordered to retreat, all the troops in front of Richmond too. The Locals will be called out as a rear guard to cover the evacuation."

"You mean . . . the army will still fight."

"Yes, like I told you, they're making for Burkville, what's left of them. General A. P. Hill was killed and God knows how many more."

Cousin Flora came up panting beside her. "But what shall we do, Mr. Kirby? What shall we do here?"

"Stay at home. Hide your valuables. The Yankees won't hurt you. I've got to stay here too. There's no room for clerks with a fleeing government. The President and his cabinet are leaving with the bullion and anything they can carry. I stay here to burn the records. I've got to get to the office too. . . . You—you just stay at home." He glared at them out of his fevered eyes and then he spun around, went hurrying down the hill.

"Oh, what'll we do?" Cousin Flora had lost control of herself. "I can't face those Yankees again. They'll be worse now that they've gotten to Richmond. Oh, why could n't I have stayed in North Carolina with Constance? Why—"

"Cousin Flora." Mildred made her voice steady. "We've got to go home now. There's nothing we can do but save what we can, and—wait."

The older woman gave her an imploring look. Her lips moved without sound. Mildred took her flabby arm. "Come on, now. We've got to help Mother and Aunt Abbie."

Cousin Flora dragged beside her. The crowd was scattering and thickening. The word *evacuation* crackled like a fire. Apparently they had all received the news at once. Some rushed away, pale and frantic. Some milled, like sheep, bewildered and lost. Some just stood still, stunned. *What shall we do?* . . .

The wailing rose in the Sunday quiet and then the air was shattered by the rumble of caissons and the clatter of hoofs on cobblestones. A bugle blared a cracked note. At the corner, they had to jump back from a careening carriage. It was packed with papers. They moved on through the flowing lines of people. Some stared sightlessly. Some sought their eyes in mute appeal. Doors flung open. Anxious faces peered out, their mouths still crowded with food. *Is Richmond going to fall?* . . . An old man ran out on

his iron-railed balcony and waved his napkin. He yelled something.

Mildred pulled Cousin Flora along. She was shaking so that Mildred had to help her through their gate. She nearly fell climbing the semicircular iron steps. In the hall, the cool and lifeless silence seemed eerie after all the noise. They hurried to the upstairs living room. When Mildred opened the door, her mother looked up brightly. She and Aunt Abbie were seated on straight chairs in the alcove, their backs to the tall bookshelves. Dimmed light, seeping through the ivy vines outside the window, fell gently on their two old faces. Her mother held up an open Bible.

"We're having service here," she called, laughing. "I've been —"

"Miss Mildred!" The bellow behind her tumbled over her mother's words. "Is the Yanks takin' Richmond?"

There were John and Delphy, huddling in the doorway, the whites of their eyes shining in their slack black faces.

"Yes, you scoundrels!" Cousin Flora's fear turned to rage that vented itself on the two shaking negroes. "They've come down here and put us out of our homes to set you free. Well, now you are free. You can go on with the nigger lovers. You need n't come whining around us any more. Go on, get out! We've suffered enough because of you."

Delphy backed away and began to wail. John held his ground and drew himself up with the dignity he had worn when his master was alive.

"I'se been free all along, Miss Flora. Mistuh Dinwiddie freed me in he will. I'se stayin' heah 'cause this is whur I belongs. I don' want no truck with nigger lovers no moh than whut you do, ma'am. I'se a Wade."

Cousin Flora shook her pudgy fist in his face, babbling with rage.

"John," Mildred said quietly, "you prepare dinner just as though nothing has happened. We'll all be safe here. Just lock all the doors and windows."

"Yes, ma'am, Miss Mildred, yes, ma'am." He retreated in order

before Cousin Flora. "Come on heah, Delphy." His sister trailed after him, weeping.

It was only when they had moved off down the hall that Mildred heard the choking sound in the room. Cousin Flora heard it at the same time. Still shaking, but with anger now and not fear, she waddled around.

Isobel Wade was standing beside her overturned chair. Her mouth was gasping open as though she were trying to scream. Only those choking sounds gurgled. Aunt Abbie, still seated, lifted her head and droned: "If it's God's will, we must accept it. Our home has been taken from us in His name. If He sees fit to deprive us of this refuge —"

"They can't take my home! They can't! They can't!" The panic in Isobel Wade's throat found voice with those words. All her resignation was stripped from her.

Cousin Flora waddled to the terrified woman. Her rage was still on her and now she let loose her long impatience with Isobel Wade.

"Isobel, stop screaming like those negroes. Nobody's going to take your home, and you can't give in to your feelings like this. Why don't you think of somebody but yourself sometime?"

Mrs. Wade's screams faltered and she looked like a child surprised at punishment. "But . . . you said . . . they robbed and put you out . . ."

"They're not going to put you out here. They've got what they want now. Everything before was to get Richmond."

"But they steal, Flora, everybody says they steal, and my things —"

"We'll hide your things. Now go over there on the sofa and lie down and compose yourself. We'll have dinner soon. We'll need our strength and wits about us this day. Mildred, you'll see about dinner, won't you?"

Mildred nodded. She watched Cousin Flora lead her mother to the sofa. Cousin Flora at least was in command of herself now and they would n't need her any more. Mildred backed through the door. Aunt Abbie's low voice droned after her in the silence.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil . . ."

All the years of her life she had come to her room to be alone. From her earliest memories she had brought here her moods, her minor tragedies and disappointments, her dreams and expectations, her dying excitements after dances and her rising hopes of a new romance, and most of all those formless urgencies that drove her before she knew Brose, and the shameful urgencies that drove her after, but never had she brought a mood like this. *All gobbled up . . . slaughtered, captured, and broken. . . .*

To escape the picture, she walked aimlessly around the room, then out through the window to the balcony. Down on Main Street carriages, overflowing with bundles, moved in a thin stream toward Mayo's bridge. A wagon piled with furniture bumped over the cobblestones going down the hill. Where could they be going? It was perhaps only panic that directed them. Far more people than those in the carriages seemed to be strolling aimlessly, as on any other Sunday. Seeing them, she would never have thought the city was being evacuated. Probably they had lived so long on fear, suffered so many alarms, that all their emotions had been drained by the dread of waiting. Then she realized that, now it was here, she had no emotions either. Mostly she was tired.

She climbed back into her room and rang for John. She had him serve her dinner in the room. While she ate the meal, vague compulsions pressed at her. She tried to think constructively of what to do, but her brain returned only to the objects she wanted to hide, and through them Brose's letters flowed like a current. When she finished dinner, she went to the washstand. The letters were in a hatbox in the bottom part.

Their paper seemed to symbolize the life of their poor country. The first were on the fine white paper she had given him when he was wounded. The next batch was the Confederate buff, the envelopes readdressed from her to him and back again. Then came the faded scraps, without envelopes, folded over and addressed on the outside. Last came the wallpaper.

Only for a moment did she allow herself to voice the fear that these letters might be the last she'd ever receive from Brose. To-day, of all times, she could not listen to the voice of fear. Quickly she crossed to the bed and placed the hatbox in the middle. Hurriedly, she piled beside it gold locket and what rings and jewelry remained. She placed her silver-mounted toilet set among the pile, and there was nothing left except her diary. It was a red leather book, with DIARY embossed in letters of gold. She opened the clasp and read: "I am Mildred Wade, five years old." She closed the book and dropped it. From under the carpet she picked up five hundred dollars. Yesterday gold had been quoted at one hundred to one. All their cash in the world was the equivalent of five dollars. Again, for one moment, she faltered and her thoughts reached out to the future. She shook away the visions and looked down at the ten-dollar bill face up on top of the money. Beside the engraving of a field gun, with finely uniformed soldiers on the near-side white horses, was printed: "Two years after the ratification of peace," and below the galloping horses were the words: "The Confederate States of America will pay TEN DOLLARS to bearer." She sighed and rolled up the bills. She pushed them into a pocket she had sewed between the hoops of her dress.

John came in then and told her that friends of her mother's wanted to see her. Baylor Warwick's mother and Mrs. Chilton were in the upstairs living room, where her mother still reclined on the sofa. They too were stilled, in a curious stricken calm. The room had the atmosphere of a death house. It was as when her father had been killed and friends came to pay their respects. Isobel Wade, her hysteria passed, accepted the visit as personal, as though they had come to console her.

Mildred could not help but pity her, who had been so lovely and so gay. She had lost everything that had formed her life and all she understood. But for the war, she would have gone unchanged until the day she died. As it was, she had tried hard in her way to find sanctuaries. A bitter, unnatural hate had sustained her until her husband's death; then she had shut herself off from life, with

that cold rigidity, until Mildred's affair with Brose had broken through that; finally she had escaped into Aunt Abbie's resignation, and now even that had failed her. But with all her pity, Mildred could not feel close to her mother, because she was afraid that intimacy would break her own control over her fear for Brose.

Mrs. Chilton and Mrs. Warwick left at dusk. Mildred saw them to the door. They were going home to wait; there was nothing else to do. There was nowhere to flee. The streets were crowded with refugees from Petersburg and other ruined villages. They wandered aimlessly about with their few belongings. In the midst of their talking, her friends would grow suddenly silent and stare bleakly into space. Mildred thought she must have looked like that, in her room alone, when she had envisioned for one moment her future. After they left, she returned to her room and went about hiding the articles she had piled on the bed. There would be no more callers. They would n't venture on the night streets.

When she finished hiding her things, she went downstairs and drank a cup of haw-root tea and ate a soda biscuit. There was nothing else. By the time she was back in her room, the night had closed in. Downtown the murmurings were louder. She went out on the balcony. A cool breeze drifted up from the river. The deepening sky was powder blue. It was the time of day she loved most. She pulled a chair close to the railing and leaned back, looking down at the darkened business section stretching toward the river. She felt that she would never see Richmond like this again.

Blurred outlines of ships on the Basin moved toward the canal. Ordnance and provisions were being moved west to join Lee's retreating army. She heard the rattle and crash of shuttling train cars. Carriages and ambulances, wagons and coal carts, moved continuously under the street lights, creaking with government records, with flour and shoes and munitions. In one of those vehicles the President huddled with his family, fleeing with his dream of empire from the city which for four years had been the fortress of his dream.

What of her own dream? Today it had been reduced to nothing but a fear. Now, in the dusk, that fear broke at last the control she had held all day. Suppose, like her father and Chester Cary, Brose did not come back. . . . But they'd all said he was too tough to be killed. He was, he was!

Just to have him again, reckless and smiling, to know again the violence of their desire, that was all she would ever ask. Her old lost world would mean no more than it had on that June morning at the breastwork, if they were together when peace was on the city and the long hours and the soft nights like this would be theirs for love. Thinking of it, she grew quiet. She was very tired. The mood of her love surrounded her. The city noises dimmed. . . .

She started up out of her chair with her eardrums ringing and a tremor shaking her. The house was shaking and broken glass crashed. Was the city being bombarded? She moved to the railing. Down by the river, the black sky was lit with a red glow. As she stared, the glow faded. There was not a sound in the blackness. It was almost as if she had dreamed it. She must have been asleep a long time. She was chilled through.

Then, right in front of her, a red geyser leaped toward the sky and she staggered back as from a blow. The explosion rang in her ears. Glass from her tall windows shattered around her feet. The porch was rocking. She was too frightened to utter a sound. The porch steadied and inside the house voices of women cried out. The voices came toward her. Their wail was caught up in the gardens, from slave quarters, and from the balconies, and then dimly from the streets beyond, until the whole city seemed to be weeping.

Steps thudded through the darkness of her room and John panted out on the balcony. He clutched a dueling pistol in each hand. He just looked at her and held one out. It was damp from his hand. The glow had faded in the sky. She moved with John to the railing. They leaned there, peering below, each holding a pistol, while a wailing rose out of the blackness.

April 1865

CHAPTER XXXIV

Say, darkies, hab you seen de massa,
Wid de muffstach on he face,
Go 'long de road some time dis morning,
Like he gwine leave de place. . . .
Dar 's wine and cider in de kitchen,
An' de darkies dey have some.
I spect it will be all 'fiscated
When de Lincom soljers come.
De massa run, ha, ha!
De darkies stay, ho, ho!
It must be now de kingdom comin',
An' de year of jubilo.

St. George Paxton groped his way sleepily through the darkness to the upper balcony. He shivered in his nightshirt when the April morning air struck him. Black clouds hung over the lower part of the river, rising from it. It must have been thunder that had awakened him. Then he heard a curious rising wail, like many voices weeping and praying. He leaned over the balustrade to see if the people to whom he rented out his lower floor were crying down there. He heard snatches of their talk, but the wailing drowned out their voices and steadily rose.

The sleep cleared from his head. The sound rose from the whole city. He looked again at the black clouds. They billowed up from the ground, rolling in waves. It was smoke. Then he remembered that the government had left orders to fire the gunboats on the river and the arsenal. He hurried to the far end of his porch and looked around the corner of the house, down toward the arsenal.

A crimson column writhed upward like a vast serpent through the

smoke. Near the ground quick flames darted, more and more of them. They ran together, a solid shimmering wall that climbed and widened. It enveloped the column, soaring toward the clouds and painting them red. Better to have let the Yankees take some ordnance; this fire might spread. He listened for sounds of fire apparatus.

A sudden volley of shouts cracked hoarsely downtown. He turned away from the corner of the house and looked over the front of the balcony. He went rigid. The clouds that had hung so black now seemed to drip blood. Scattered flames leaped out of the darkness over the heart of the city. For the first time since his youth he felt his heart laboring. He tried to control himself, but the chill made him tremble. He clutched the balustrade.

A mountain of fire billowed out right below the Basin. God, that burning building must be the Shockoe tobacco warehouses! The dry tobacco would act like oil. Below, a bright peak of blaze spiraled upward. The army clothing depot, at Pearl Street. But those others—they must be commissary stores and other tobacco warehouses.

The fools. The fools! They could n't have done this. He had heard them talking of it yesterday when they loaded the gold and silver bullion. They were endangering the whole city to prevent the Yankees from gathering a few supplies, when the cause was lost anyway. There was nothing to gain from this. Their entire national wealth in coin and bullion was little more than three hundred thousand dollars. Their currency was worthless. Surely they could n't believe the country could go on now that Lee's army, all that had given them life for the past two years, was broken and stumbling through the spring mud while the armies of the United States encircled the dwindling, starving band of survivors.

No, they did n't think that! They did n't think anything. They were escaping from realities now as they always had, but this time it was actual flight. Creeping like fugitives from small town to private home, evading the armies that overran the Southern states, they would cling to their theories while the city that had protected

them for four years was left in flames, left to the rifferaff that was swarming over it now.

It was the shouts of the rabble he heard, deepening, swelling, as the columns of fire marched on like a conquering army. New flames joined the main body and swept up to Main Street and down to the river, up toward Ninth and east as far as he could see. St. George shook as though with the ague. His fingers ached from gripping the balustrade. He made himself stand away from the railing, struggled for his old detachment.

Why should he care? Had n't he warned them against it from the first? What was it to him that the flames charged toward his old bank, hemming it in, climbing on its gray walls? He had resigned his vice presidency when he entered the Treasury Department. He was too old ever to be active again, too tired ever to desire it. His money had long since been lost in the devaluated Confederate bonds, and he had known that rent from his lower floor and basement would have to secure Agnes and himself through their few remaining years. After all, he had enjoyed Richmond when he was young. Why not enjoy now this magnificent spectacle of a whole city burning, a country's capital, a civilization, going up in flames? He should move out a chair and sit here on the balcony as he used to, and ponder the follies of men . . . this the greatest folly of them all.

A blast chopped the air and his eardrums sang. Glass broke beneath him. The porch rocked. He lurched forward, grabbed at the rail. It trembled as if it might break. With a sudden frenzy he pushed. Let it break! Let it catapult him to the flagstones below. Let him not see any more of this. The balustrade steadied and he clung to it with a sob. His nightshirt stuck to his wet body. He lifted his head. It was *his* city that was being burned.

Now the high walls of the Gallego Flour Mills blazed and, next to them, the Wade tobacco warehouse was a pyre. Boats burned in the Basin and, at one end of it, the thick walls of the public tobacco warehouse reached upward in a red square. On down Seventh Street the column of fire had marched over the Richmond and

Petersburg Depot, the Franklin Paper Company, the Virginia Steel and Iron Works, to the railroad bridge. Bright along the river edge it ran, throwing out dancing waves on the water. Through the crackle and the crashing he heard the mob's howl. It was a single, chilling cry that followed the flames up to Main Street, where the banks burned, and the hotels, the homes of rich and poor, the newspaper offices and the Confederate post office, stores and warehouses, and up on Ninth Street toward Mechanics' Hall, where the War Offices themselves were being taken by the charging columns of flame.

"God damn them! God damn them!"

It was n't the armies of the United States that finally humbled his city. It was those vipers the city had harbored, with their idiotic theories of States' rights and the just position of the Confederacy before God and the world. They had used everything he and his father and their forefathers had built. They had used everything built and possessed by these people now running from their burning homes. They had used the State Capitol building, the private homes, the office buildings, the warehouses and railroads. They had used the banks and streets, the wharves and canals. They had turned the stores and homes into charnel houses. They had used Richmond's women as seamstresses and nurses and dancing partners, as hostesses and cooks and scrubwomen. While their own states, that had led in the secession, clamored for protection as soon as an invading army touched their soil, they had used the city's old men and little boys and anybody who would stand in the freezing trenches of last winter. They had killed the men, broken the women, impoverished the city.

Now that it could protect them no longer they fled, burning it. To prevent United States troops from taking some tobacco, some ordnance they did n't need, this government would destroy a whole city and turn loose a horde of criminals and riffraff on its people. And those people, without food or money because they had starved and fought to keep the Confederacy alive, must now be without homes or means of work because of these fools of the government.

They had been the enemy since the war began. Why had no one heeded him when he begged to keep Virginia out of that Confederacy? Why had no one listened when he pleaded for surrender last fall when it was clear that the cause was hopeless and the states that had pulled them into it had lost heart? Why had n't he died? Why should he and his wife live to see their way of life destroyed? Thousands had died to hold forts at this river site against the Indians. Generations had worked to build this city as the capital of Virginia. Now it was laid waste, without cause or reason, by the fools who had made it their capital.

A tumbling wall crashed and a scream rose from the mob. But the howling went on, rising with the crackle of the flames.

The pickets moved in at dawn. The battalion quietly left the breastworks. They moved behind the flanking earthen mounds of gun embrasures and Dennis saw that the big columbiads were spiked. The shellproof huts of the artillerymen were empty. There were knife slices of the men's initials cut into the tarred half logs that supported the shelter. He looked at the sharpened sticks of the abatis at the end of the line. He knew it was his last look.

When they struck New Market Road, the battalion formed in columns of squads and marched at route step toward Richmond. The drum was silent. The torn flag flapped in the early morning breeze. The men slouched, and their broken shoes shuffled over the red clay. Some of the old men were crying. The boys' weather-darkened faces were set. Every now and then he would see one of them brush away tears with a quick, dirty hand.

They had all heard the explosions of the gunboats and the following explosion in Richmond. They could all see the black smoke clouds hanging over the city. They all knew where they were going and why. No one spoke. They had been ordered not to sing, to prevent the Yankees' knowing they had abandoned their lines. Dennis doubted if any would have sung anyway. These kids, and the poor old men, were not veteran troops, no matter how much they

stood or how hard they fought. The nearest to a soldier was Lieutenant Sheppard Kirby. He had never once wiped away a tear or sniffled. His grim young face might have been set in rock. He had wanted to join the regular army this spring. Maybe he was thinking of the way he would join it, falling into its line of retreat after leaving his home to the Yankees. Maybe he was thinking of his uncle he had seen killed at Fort Gilmer. That kind man had tried conscientiously, but he had never become a soldier. Maybe he was thinking of his cousin, who had fought with them at Dahlgren's raid. Captain Kirby was the toughest soldier Dennis had ever seen.

When the road veered into Osborne Turnpike, from where they usually saw the spires of Richmond, Dennis saw the thick black smoke rising from the buildings. Back along the road, the smoke had seemed to be hanging above the city. His body tightened as he realized it was coming from the streets themselves. He glanced at the men. Their heads were all up now and all their eyes were turned left, staring at those rolling clouds that grew less black as they approached. They were red-tinted. There was no lagging among the men. Their steps quickened. The old men had stopped crying. They were not thinking of the evacuation of their country's capital any more. They were thinking of their city burning, of their homes and wives and children and parents.

They marched down the hill, crossed the creek, and skirted Fulton Hill, into the main street of Rocketts. The whole line stiffened and Dennis felt his breath draw in. The street swarmed with slatterns and a vicious-looking lot of men, yelling and laughing, and one pair drunkenly dancing. The men wore pieces of filthy and tattered Confederate uniforms, pieces of Yankee uniforms, civilian rags, and motley mixtures of them all. A bearded brute in ill-fitting Yankee trousers and a frock coat yelled when he saw the reserve battalion. The whole mob took up the jeer. Dennis drew out his sword. He shouted in his deepest voice:—

“Battalion . . . halt! Attention.”

They stood as if they were on parade. Every chin was up. Every eye straight ahead. They knew, as Dennis knew, that these were

the sweepings of the lost city, the deserters of both armies, the criminals and conscript evaders, the riffraff and adventurers who had been run off the streets, the petty extortionists and gamblers who had fled Winder's police. Now the rats were coming out of their holes.

"Fix bayonets. At trail arms, foh-wad . . . hao-o!"

There was no glancing at the rolling smoke cloud now. Maybe some of the old men trembled a little, maybe some of the younger boys grew taut, but they were the best soldiers they had ever been as they marched toward the hoodlums who were taking over their city. Sullenly, jeering, the mob fell back. More women poured out of the houses, such people as he had never imagined. They shook their fists and hooted. One red-faced slut spat at Dennis. He kept his eyes straight ahead.

The crowded street fell behind, but the jeers still rang in his brain. For the first time he felt it would have been better to end the war now than to turn the city over to that scum. For the first time he felt the war was lost. The column swung into Main Street and, when they breasted the hill, the whole line faltered. A low moan sighed through it. The black smoke was swirling on Main Street about ten squares away, billowing out in waves, like a shroud over the city. Through rifts in the smoke, Dennis saw flame climbing. To hell with the orders to join the retreating army. Their duty was here. The women in the city . . . Mildred . . .

"Colonel Leatherbury! My wife—"

"Close up, men, close up!" He quickened his step. The men moved forward toward the smoke. As they drew closer Dennis saw the sulphurous clouds split more and more by spirals of fire. At Twenty-third Street, he saw the burning buildings. Sizzling timbers fell into the street and the smoke was so thick he could n't see half a square away. Shouts rose ahead. The heat was like a furnace. In the distance, a blast shook the ground.

They swung off Main and turned left at the next square into Franklin. It seemed that at every window women stared out at them. There was no waving, no cheering, no weeping, no pleading.

Silent, the women watched them with looks of anguish. Dennis thought he would never forget as long as he lived. Crowded carriages and loaded wagons passed the column. Where did they think they could go? A worn blonde woman in a faded dress ran up to him. "Can't you soldiers put out this fire? I've just come from Petersburg . . . my home was bombarded . . . I've got to have somewhere to live!"

"We'll try, ma'am."

They were marching behind the burning Main Street buildings and he heard the walls tumbling and floors crashing. Through the noise rose a howling cry, as from a hunting pack. The heat was suffocating. Women and old men and little children were pulling beds and boxes and bureaus out of their flaming homes. A young girl sat on a trunk and stared at the solid wall of fire that had been the back of her house. Ahead, there was another blast, and a white pillar writhed up through the smoke. Dennis glanced at the men.

They were doing splendidly. After all, they had dreaded this for so long that its coming was almost a relief. They had been through too much to feel keenly even the devastation of their city; they were too weary to think of personal loss. There was little sense of personal loss anyway, when their capital had surrendered. Only two men, both old, had deserted. He had seen them drop out and so had their officers. The others had, in the end, become soldiers, marching through an evacuated city to join their main army.

He felt sad for them now as he remembered their first marches when they had been so green, so eager and hopeful. He remembered their first time under fire, down on the Peninsula which they were later to know so well; their first real fight, against Dahlgren, rushing through the dusk toward the breastworks west of the city; then against Sheridan, north of the city, when Jeb Stuart died; then against Butler at Fort Gilmer, east of the city, where they had helped save Richmond. East, west, and north, they had fought off raids and cavalry attacks and infantry assaults. Now they were

going south with the city still at their backs, but it was falling behind.

The column swung into Fourteenth Street. There was another ground-shaking blast and fragments of shell from the armory screamed and fell around them. The lines wavered again and several of the old men broke. No one tried to stop them.

"Close up, men."

They moved forward slowly, between the burning, tumbling buildings. Smouldering timber and papers and furniture littered the street. The smoke was stifling. They crossed Main Street and Dennis saw the mob whose howling had shrieked with the flames since first they entered the city. They were plunging into buildings and stumbling out, laden with supplies. The army stores were blazing. Shoes, blankets, haversacks, bolts of cloth, canteens, were strewn over the sidewalk and out into the street, trampled underfoot. Private warehouses were burning. They were not as far gone as the government supply depots, and against the flame reflecting on the windows Dennis saw heads blacked out. His hand tightened on his sword. He'd like to clear that rabble out. A smoke-blackened officer stumbled toward him. His uniform was singed. His eyes were red-rimmed.

"Hurry! Hurry and get over the bridge! The cavalry is coming right behind you."

"But somebody's got to clear this mob out! They're looting private stores and warehouses, and the homes—"

"You could n't do it. The whole damned city is on fire. There're thousands in this mob. The Invalid Battalion tried to stop them. They're not afraid of anything. They're crazy! They're so starved they're like animals. Your best place is with the army."

"But how did it all start?"

"Jesus, man, we've no time to talk. Get your troops—"

"These troops are Richmond men. Their homes are burning. They have a right to know what's happening."

"General Ewell ordered the tobacco burned. We burned the army depots and allowed these people to get in and save what they could.

They've gone wild and are setting fire to all the stores. The houses caught from that. Now, for the love of Christ, will you go?"

Dennis ran along to the head of the column. Where the gutter was deep near Cary Street, he saw men and women lying in it, stooping, pushing, fighting. He saw a dirty brown liquid flowing, filled with *débris* and charred fragments. It was the whiskey the government had thrown into the streets. The people were lapping it up. A woman sat on the curb eating a slab of salt pork.

A mob choked Cary Street, fighting into the commission stores. Two filthy men in rags staggered under a coffin. It was piled with food. Women stuffed raw vegetables into their mouths, broke eggs and swallowed them. Their howling was deafening. More of his men fell out.

The crowd was thinner toward the canal. Rutherford Blair, whom Dennis knew to be one of the richest men in the city, stumbled across the street under a bolt of red flannel. A man was beating a woman with a barrel stave. She was huddled over some bread in her apron and screaming. A big, brown-skinned negro pulled the white man off and pitched him into the gutter. The white man started licking up whiskey. The woman ran away.

At the canal the small bridge was beginning to burn. A canal boat, ablaze, had just floated under it. A gray officer stood at the bridgehead with half a dozen dismounted cavalry holding carbines in their hands. Near them lay a dead man.

"Should n't we put this fire out so the cavalry can cross?" Dennis shouted to the officer.

The officer shook his head. He was as cold as a statue. "They'll cross the conduits," he said in a flat voice. "Go ahead—they're right behind you."

The ground shook again and shells exploded in the air. The battalion ran across the smoking bridge under a spray of fragments. Flames shot up on the railing. There were hardly any people south of the canal. Down on the river Dennis saw the high flames of what had been Haxall's Flour Mills. His men struck Mayo's

Bridge. Barrels of tar were placed along the edges with pine knots around them.

The bridge was cluttered with civilians. The battalion marched straight ahead, forcing them to the sides. Most were women. Their belongings were in bundles. There were few carriages. They were packed. On the Manchester side two women in black were sitting on a box by the tollhouse, pleading for a ride. A man in a plaid suit stood at the bridgehead offering a slightly charred ham for sale. An army ambulance clattered by with several crying women in the back.

Dennis halted his battalion. They turned and looked back. Gary's Cavalry Brigade, who had been their companions so many months in the lines, were streaming across the bridge. The last troop was firing the tar barrels. Beyond, along the river front, Richmond was a jagged sky line of flames. On back, up to the Capitol, it was a city of fire. Through all the blaze and swirling smoke, the white columns of the Capitol loomed on its hill and, as red as the fire, the Confederate flag fluttered over them.

Up where the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad bridge touched Seventh Street, Dennis saw the buildings of the arsenal burning, and, beyond, the massive walls of the old state armory were going. The bridge itself was on fire where it passed over the spur of river. On that railroad he had traveled south to Roanoke Island. For that road Lee's army had so fiercely fought south of Petersburg and lost irreplaceable men. There was nothing left to fight for.

The retreat, he knew, would be only the last forlorn stand. Yet he wanted to be with them because it would be his last stand too. All that he had possessed, all that he had believed in and lived by, was going up in those flames. It was like watching his own life burn. His home had long since been destroyed by Sheridan's raiders, his farming implements stolen or ruined; his slaves had been taken from him. Now even the country for which he had lost everything would be taken from him, too. All that he could endure if he had his arm, if he had the strength to rebuild his plantation, or even to work. And that loss, too, he could endure

if he had any dream of Mildred. But he had nothing — nothing to work with or for.

He turned from the burning city. His men raised their stricken eyes to him. He ordered them forward. They turned slowly and shuffled down the street of Manchester. None looked back as they marched to join Lee's retreating army, and the mob's cry bayed after them.

The auction house that had been a wholesale drygoods store before the war and a hospital during the Seven Days was the newest building to burn. Mary Mattox had said it would be, and they were at the glass door when the mob broke it in. It was the first place they'd gotten into before it had already been ransacked.

"You'll have to work fast, Martha," Mary screamed at her. "This'll go up like kindlin'."

Mrs. Fitchett did n't answer. She was already peering over the counters at the shelves, trying to see everywhere at once. Long fingers of smoke reached it and the heat was like an oven.

"Hurry," Mary shrieked, "'n' git yoh hands on somethin'. I'm goin' with this!" She had clutched up a white lace bedspread.

"Naw you ain't!" A wiry woman wearing a greasy and torn calico wrapper grabbed the other end of the spread. They both pulled. It ripped in half. Mary fell into Mrs. Fitchett and knocked her against the counter. A stout woman in black pushed her. The woman had a big face and a proud look. She carried an ostrich egg in her hand, held high above her head. Mrs. Fitchett had seen eggs like that on mantels of homes where she used to sew. The woman grabbed at a book in front of her. Mrs. Fitchett grabbed too. She peered at the printing on it: *Hardee's Infantry Tactics*. The woman jerked it. Mrs. Fitchett pulled her hand away from the book and spat on her.

"Oh . . . Oh . . . you filthy . . ."

Mrs. Fitchett pushed her and the egg fell out of her hand. It broke on the counter. Mrs. Fitchett screamed with laughter. She

had never seen anything so funny as that proud woman's face. Something crashed into her and spun her around. A fat negro woman plunged on through the crowd with a shiny black beaver. Mrs. Fitchett was pressed back against the counter by a surge in the crowd. A hard-faced, painted girl had a velvet-lined poke bonnet with two waving plumes stuck on the side of her head. It was too big for her. The surge pressed away and Mrs. Fitchett turned toward the back of the store where the auctioneering used to be done.

The crowd was in her way now. Panic shook her. She might not get anything here, either. The smoke was thickening. It burned her eyes. She started to push. The crowd didn't yield. She kicked and clawed. A hole was made by a sweating negro shouldering his way out. He had a slab of bacon wrapped in two lace cuffs, the kind Franklin Street ladies used to sell by cutting lace off old dresses.

Mrs. Fitchett went clawing and kicking into that hole. A hag with streaming gray hair tried to block her. Mrs. Fitchett took hold of her rotted silk dress and jerked it in half. The woman stood in a black-dirty petticoat. Her hands clutched cakes of homemade perfumed soap and she tried to hit Mrs. Fitchett with them. Mrs. Fitchett scratched her across her exposed breast and the woman backed away from her, screaming. Mrs. Fitchett was at the counter. Men and women were fighting to get over it, and fighting to get out. A tangle-bearded man in a shredded butternut army shirt was struggling to get out, clutching in a blackened fist a set of false teeth. Mrs. Fitchett waited till he broke clear, then sprang into the opening. She slid straight across the counter and landed in a pile of arms and legs. She clambered on top of them. Over by the corner was a set of Dresden china. She pushed over to it. She could hardly see from the smoke in her eyes. She felt cooked from the heat. A bruise on her forehead throbbed. The china set was piled on a tray. Mrs. Fitchett pulled it down. Now she had to wait until the crowd thinned.

"Fire! Fire!"

An old corn-shuck mattress blazed suddenly on the other side of the store. The mob swept toward the door. Mrs. Fitchett looked for Mary Mattox. She was lying on the floor, clutching a pair of lady's evening gloves, and feet were kicking her and stepping on her. Mrs. Fitchett watched until the crowd was cleared around the counter. She slid over with her china and ran toward the door. Mary was trying to get up. The far wall had turned into a flame. She heard bricks fall. She stumbled outside, going sidewise to cling to the china.

Something hard cut into her arm and she heard a crash. A cut-glass punch bowl lay in scattered pieces on the sidewalk in front of her and dirty whiskey was flowing from it over the bricks. A sallow-faced, thin man in a black and white checked suit stood looking at it. Then he whirled on her. His eyes looked crazy.

"Knock my whiskey down. Break my bowl. You dirty bitch!" His fist was coming before she saw it. The blow shot lights in front of her eyes and she fell backward. The wall of the burning building stopped her. She heard her china smash on the sidewalk. Her head spun for a moment. Then her eyes cleared.

The man was picking up her Dresden teapot, which had n't broken. She saw the thick base of the cut-glass punch bowl. She grabbed it up. He saw her and turned. She brought it down with all her strength. He seemed to jump backward. Blood spurted out from his forehead. He stood there, swaying, and then he dropped like a sack, his face over the gutter. The people stooping there with cups and pails and hats shoved his head away. Mrs. Fitchett turned back to her china set. It was covered by a pushing mob, seizing up pieces to run to the gutter and scoop up the whiskey.

She looked back at the building. The second floor crashed and shot out a wave that singed her. She fell back from the blast of heat. A stout man pushed her. "Look where you're going, you filthy slut."

She recognized him for one of the flour speculators they had tried to rob during the bread riot.

"Go — yourself," she screamed at him. He was carrying a

nightgown wrapped around something. He took it out. It was a buggy whip, new and shiny. She raised the punch-bowl base again. He backed away. "Yah! Yah!" she screamed after him.

Down near the corner she heard the fresh cry of another mob forming. She ran toward it. She stumbled over a man in a Confederate uniform lying near the wrecked doorway of a building that was a smouldering skeleton. Something about his upturned Irish face checked her. She saw he had only one arm. He was the soldier who'd lain next to Joe in the Wade Hospital. Miss Wade had bathed his amputated nub. He must've been one of the Invalid Battalion who'd tried to stop the crowd. That was before she'd gotten here. The mob cry shrieked high and she knew they were in front of a new store. She ran on. A gray-haired man, with blood on one cheek, was facing them, crying and yelling.

"For God's sake, don't burn my store. I'm not a speculator. Go in! Take anything you want. But, for God's sake, don't burn my store."

Mrs. Fitchett brushed past him, but the doorway was choked. She kicked and clawed until she had a wedge. She could see into the store. A woman stripped a dress from a frame of wire hoops. A man in a brocaded silk waistcoat grabbed the hoops. A young, stubble-faced man in a dirty gray uniform reached for the dress. The woman held it high and Mrs. Fitchett got a good look at it. It was the dress she had been working on for Mrs. Virginius Kirby the night Joe told her about secession. A black-skinned negro with his shirt torn off him came charging toward the door swinging a pair of brass fire tongs. The crowd broke and she was hurled back out into the street. The negro ran out.

He stood with his back to the building, holding one hand high. Rings and watches glistened in it and a necklace ran down his wrist. He swung the fire tongs in front of him. "Stand back, white folks, stand back. I'se a bad nigger. I—"

The shot cracked right in her ears and the flame blinded her a moment. When she saw the negro again he was sprawled on the

ground and a frock-coated gentlemen, with a smoking pistol in his hand, was diving for the jewelry. He was buried under a mass of men and women.

She stumbled away. Her teeth began to chatter. She never would get anything. She reached the corner and hot, red-tinted smoke came out of the door of the American Hotel. The globes on the balcony were cracking and falling to the pavement. Men and women were tugging chairs and rugs out of the lobby. A middle-aged man with a ravaged face came leaping out, holding a brass spittoon in front of him. He was yelling like a maniac. He ran to the gutter and started scooping up the thin trickle.

Food on Cary Street . . . that's where the food is . . . Cary Street. . . .

She followed the newly forming crowd and ran down Eleventh Street hill. An old lady and gentleman were sitting on the sidewalk on a trunk. His shaking hands held a loaf of bread with one end torn off. At Cary Street two men were pushing a barrel. It swerved and hit the curb and broke open. Flour spilled all over the gutter and street and sidewalk. The crowd running with her scrambled down and scraped it up and stuffed it into pockets. Mrs. Fitchett passed into Cary Street. She could n't scuffle with them. She was getting tired.

The fire was worse here and so was the crowd. All the buildings were blazing. She stood still a moment and the people swirled around her. *Ain't theah nothin' for a body . . .* A scrawny man came toward her, reeling under a lamp shade piled with food. He had his hands locked under the small end. Snarling, she rushed at him and pushed. He stumbled and a jar rolled out of the lamp shade and crashed on the pavement. She scooped it up. It was pickles and only one side was broken. She turned it over quickly and stuffed back the pickles that had fallen out. The man was cursing her. Mrs. Fitchett kicked him. Her broken shoe caught him high on the thigh. He turned and limped off.

She looked around, clutching the good side of the jar. This was the way to get things. Way down the street the yelling grew louder.

She moved toward it. Her feet were dragging now. Near the curb some women were scrambling for potatoes that rolled around in the dust. One potato skidded out of a woman's fingers and rolled to the curb. Mrs. Fitchett picked it up. The young woman climbed to her feet. One eye was blacked and closed. She wore a white dress that was torn and streaked. She had a pretty face in spite of it all. Her good eye narrowed and she lunged at Mrs. Fitchett. Mrs. Fitchett held up the broken pickle jar.

"I'll cut yoh pretty face to ribbons if 'n you tech me, you stinkin' little whore."

The girl backed away. Mrs. Fitchett knew she was n't any whore. She stood there crying. The howl down the street swelled. Mrs. Fitchett turned again. That was not the yell of another store being opened. They were saying something. Everybody in the street stopped and listened.

The Yankees are coming. . . . The Yankees are coming. . . . The damned Yankees are in Richmond. . . .

Mrs. Fitchett held her pickle jar and her potato to her. Yankees. Where was Mary Mattox? She glanced quickly around the street. The crowd was running in every direction. Glass and pieces of food and torn clothing and broken boxes littered the street. Mrs. Fitchett stared at the débris.

The Yankees are coming. . . .

Where was Mary Mattox? She stumbled across the street. At the corner she heard the clatter of horses' hoofs on the cobblestones. It sounded as if it were on Main Street. She moved close to the building and ran down toward the canal. *The Yankees are coming. . . .*

Virginius Kirby ran down the steps in the Belvius Building. Outside, on Twelfth Street, the smoke crowded up from Main and dusky figures ran through it. His eyes watered, straining through the fog. The howling of the mob was a babble. A bent figure shuffled out of the smoke and stopped in front of him. Virginius

saw captain's bars on a collar, a neat and patched Confederate gray uniform. Then he saw a gray, hollow-cheeked face with cold, bright eyes staring out of sunken sockets. The officer held his hand on his revolver butt.

"I'm Virginius Kirby, clerk in the War Department. I was just upstairs, looking for someone in Elzey's department, but they've all gone. It's terrible to turn this rabble loose on the city without any protection!"

The soldier's hand slipped away from the pistol. "I'm in the Invalid Battalion. We tried to stop 'em, but they're wild. Several of us have been watching the government offices to keep them from being fired."

"This Richmond department here should have done something. Somebody should do something. This mob'll have every house in the city burning."

"I reckon the Yankees will scatter them. They're here now."

Virginius fell back, leaned against the doorjamb. "Is — that — the yelling — I heard?" His voice was a whisper.

The officer nodded. "On Main Street now. But don't be alarmed, sir. We'll be safe enough. The mayor formally surrendered the city to General Weitzel."

Virginius stared at him. Was the man crazy? He tried to speak, to say this was no time to worry about their own safety. But his throat was tight. The howling swept nearer and under it he heard the clatter of hoofs on the cobblestones. *The Yankees are coming. . . . The Yankees are coming. . . . The Yankees are in Richmond. . . .* Virginius stumbled out from the building.

"Excuse me," he muttered. His legs wobbled as they used to when he was drunk in those long-ago days when his first wife was living and they would drink too much wine on holidays. He climbed the stone steps into Capitol Square. The steep winding brick walks seemed almost more than he could manage. A neighbor's boy ran past him, holding an ornamental clock. "The Yankees are here, Mr. Kirby!" Virginius panted after him, saw the boy run out of sight over the hill.

Men and women and children huddled in little groups on the grass. Pieces of furniture and open boxes were stacked around them. None of them spoke. An old lady nibbled at a piece of hardtack. Three negro women in aprons and house caps sprawled on a bench. "'T ain't while runnin' now, white man." Virginius' heart strained as he climbed the hill. Beside the walk, a little girl was asleep on a green Duncan Phyfe sofa. A young woman sat at the end, staring sightlessly. Two negro bucks ran toward him, whooping. They divided and leaped past him. Their white teeth flashed. "Lincum soldiers come!"

He reached the plateau in front of the Capitol and wavered there, sucking in gulps of air. A man in a gray caped overcoat held a sobbing woman close to him. He looked at Virginius in hopeless appeal.

Virginius turned down the driveway, making for the Ninth Street exit. The clatter of hoofs rang on Ninth Street hill. Hard voices yelled. Through the iron railings he saw cavalry moving against the gray walls of St. Paul's Church. New blue uniforms shone. Brass and steel glittered.

Virginius stood frozen in the driveway. His heart seemed to stop. All life stood still except the Yankee cavalry turning into the gates, the coats of their sleek horses gleaming. He watched them coming toward him. Not until they were on him did he move. Then, mechanically, he backed out of their way.

He saw triumph on their well-fed faces. There were no tangled beards, no scraggly hair, no gray wisps creeping through holes in flopping hats. The sun, struggling through the smoke clouds, glowed on the visors of their blue forage caps. Not a uniform was patched or muddy. Above every stirrup a cavalry boot glistened. The men sat easily in the fine saddles, with Spencer repeating carbines stuck in their saddle holsters. Their clear, firm skin creased in smiles, their bright eyes laughed. Their voices rang hard and harsh and happy. They rode exultantly along the drive where Stonewall Jackson's body had been carried.

The head of the column halted in front of the Capitol. Several

of them rolled off their horses and ran up the broad, white steps with excited cries. The whole column halted. Gaping negroes streamed into the square, and several motley whites. Virginius heard a shout and he realized where the cavalymen were running. His eyes lifted to the crimson-barred Confederate flag.

As he saw it, fluttering over the burning city, it jerked down the flagpole. The foreign voices hit him with wild laughter. The red flag of his country disappeared. He thought of Charles and his quiet, friendly drugstore . . . of the American Hotel where he and St. George had drunk brandy together winter before last. He had seen it blazing. The old building of Mechanics' Hall, where his office had been for four years, was nothing but flames. Where were all the sheets of buff Confederate paper he had scribbled on? What of all those battle reports he had filed? . . . First Manassas, where Jackson won his name and the Rebel Yell first screamed. . . . The Seven Days, where Lee became the symbol of the army and McClellan lost his fame. . . . Second Manassas, where Pope, blundering and bragging, had been hammered out of Virginia. . . . Sharpsburg, where the army had fought over their own dead and worn out three Yankee waves. . . . Fredericksburg, where Burnside had broken his army against the gray line, and broken himself. . . . Chancellorsville, where Lee's strategy weaved one of the world's military masterpieces and Old Jack rode to his death by his own men in the dusky woods. . . . Gettysburg, when their hopes were at high noon, when Lee was betrayed by his subordinates, and Pickett's division wrote its name in blood in their charge up Cemetery Ridge. . . . The Wilderness, where Grant got his first taste of the Army of Northern Virginia, and floundered and fell back through the screaming, hot woods. . . . Spotsylvania, where Grant learned that Lee was not Bragg, and his flanking movement was hurled back in his face. . . . Cold Harbor, where Grant learned that his masses in assault could be annihilated by the hungry, tattered savages. . . . The Crater, where Grant's undermining had been a slaughter for his own troops. . . . All those battles that had been fought ended in this — in his watching the red-striped flag

of the United States climb their flagpole. He turned away from the gloating cheers of the foreigners.

He walked unseeing. Suddenly the liquid voices of negroes singing in the distance aroused him. He became aware that he was crossing Broad Street. *De massa run, ha ha . . . De darkies stay, ho ho . . .* Coming up the hill was a solid mass of blue, and their faces were black.

He hurried into Ninth Street. At Marshall, he passed the square, red brick house where Chief Justice John Marshall had lived. *It must be now de kingdom comin' . . .* Where was he hurrying? What would there be for him at home? But what would there be for him anywhere? *An' de year of jubilo . . .* He hurried faster.

He was stumbling when he reached his house. It looked deserted, so run-down it was. He hardly noticed. Climbing the steps, he had to pause for breath. The straining of his heart would have terrified him yesterday; now it didn't matter. He opened the door quietly. The house was silent. Some of the boarders had fled; he had seen them in the mob. He realized now that he wanted no one to know he was here.

He tiptoed down the hall and into his study. Dusty furniture littered the room. He picked his way through it to the desk. Upstairs he heard his wife walking the floor. She was waiting for him. Poor thing, he did n't want to see her. He did n't want to see anybody, except . . . He opened the upper right-hand drawer of his desk. He took out the daguerreotype of his first wife. As he looked at her young beauty, he knew he was seeing it for the last time.

He had returned to her for thirty years of his life, but he could n't return to her now. Even her memory could not sustain him in this. Faintly in the distance he heard the singing and the cheering. There was not a sound in the house. Upstairs his wife had stopped her pacing. The least he could do for her would be to exclude from what he left behind him the image of the woman he had loved. He held a match to the daguerreotype. It burned in a quick flame.

When it was nothing but ashes he crushed them in his hand. He put the ashes in the pocket of his coat. Then, methodically, he opened the centre drawer, tore off a strip of wallpaper, placed it on the desk, dipped his pen in the red pokeberry ink. His mind was never clearer. The words flowed. He wrote without a pause:—

“April 3, 1865. I, Virginius Allen Kirby, having no desire to survive the independence of my country and being of as sound a mind as is possible with a conquering army in the city of my birth, do make this last will and testament, in which I bequeath: 1— all the slaves I never owned to Harriet Beecher Stowe; 2— all my ideals of liberty and States’ rights to Abraham Lincoln; 3— all my veneration and respect for General Robert E. Lee and the peerless Army of Northern Virginia, to posterity; 4— all my real and personal property, if any is salvaged from the Yankees, to my wife, Grace Sheppard Kirby; 5— all my hatred of the United States, with its practice of oppression under the hypocrisy of democracy, to my son, Sheppard Charles Kirby.”

He read over the writing and placed his pipe upon the head of it. He knew this was the only freedom a Confederate could have. He reached in the bottom right-hand drawer, and took the silver-mounted pistol off the plush. *De massa run, ha ha . . .* He looked once around the cluttered room. Then he lifted the pistol. He felt its cold, hollowed muzzle against his temple. *De darkies stay, ho ho. . . .*

When they heard the negro soldiers singing up Broad Street hill, Milton and Lorenzo Duke went out on the upper balcony. The banks of sulphurous black fog were more than four blocks away to the south, and smoke drifted toward them only in thin clouds, rising above their house. Milton could see clearly the black faces and the blue uniforms as they turned at Ninth Street and marched down to Capitol Square. *Say darkies, have you seen the massa . . .* He turned to Lorenzo with a grin.

"Well, son, the Yanks 'll put out the fire 'n' save us."

Lorenzo nodded. His pale face was creased in a scowl.

"Now, Renze, 't ain't while stayin' so down in the mouth. You can come out of yoh hidin' now 'n' enjoy yohself."

"The people heah ain't goin' to let me enjoy myself. I feel like a damned convict, anyways, from hidin' heah for over six months."

"Hell, the Yankees own this city now. The people in Richmond ain't goin' to have nothin' to say about what you do or don't do."

"They 'll hate me."

"Let 'em. They 'll have to come to you foh work. You're the one what's on top now. You don't have to ask no odds of ary soul. You can buy what you want and do what you want."

He see de smoke way up de river . . . where de Lincum gunboats lay . . .

"I don't want to be on the side with no Yankees. These people ain't never goin' to get over hatin' 'em and they 'll hate me too."

Milton looked at his son's sallow, sullen face. He put his arm around the bony shoulders. "They hate the likes of us anyhow, Renze. I lived a heap longer than you have 'n' I know. We can stand their hate if'n we don't have to knuckle to 'em any. They got to come to us now."

Lorenzo nodded, but his expression didn't change. He kept staring at the negro troops filing past the Capitol. "They ain't never goin' to git over hatin' the Yankees for bringin' them niggers in and they 'll hate us too. You 'll see."

Milton removed his arm and stepped back. "I reckon you'd ruther be one of them soljuhs out theah in the mud with no home to come back to. I reckon you'd ruther be like the Wades with theah warehouse burned 'n' no money to spend. I worked like a slave to git all our stuff moved from that warehouse into this yere house. I've saved it all while the other warehouses was burnin'. If'n we did n't live heah we would n't have a house, 'cause our old house done burned. That fire's crossed Main 'n' it's gittin' at them houses on the south side of Franklin. That 'll fix them

aristocrats." He had forgotten his son for a moment. He looked back at him. "I reckon you'd ruther be like that."

Lorenzo turned to him. His face was set and his thin lips drawn tight. Milton liked to see him look that way.

"I'd ruther be one of them aristocrats than have all the money we made. And I'm goin' to be one, too. You heah that, you old fool? I ain't goin' to keep on savin' money. I'm goin' to buy good clothes 'n' read books 'n' learn how to talk right. I'm goin' to marry one of them girls, like Mildred Wade."

Milton Duke chuckled. "We done traded in all our shiplasters foh gold, ain't we? They ain't no gold in Richmond, is theah? Well, with what you got you could git a gal like Mildred Wade if'n you didn't have no clothes 'n' couldn't talk a-tall. Heh-heh. . . ."

"Aw, you don't know yoh ass from yoh elbow. She married Brose Kirby 'n' he ain't got nothin'."

"Well, what'd I tell you? He ain't no aristocrat."

"No, but he's got something I'd sure like to git my hands on. I never did have a piece like that."

"Ha, so it's women you're talkin' about."

"Did you think I was talkin' about men? I don't care whether they like me or not. They ain't got nothin' I want."

"Money'll buy any of 'em. Besides, they're goin' to be powerful short of men. A lot of their beaus 'n' husbands ain't comin' back. This city's goin' to be fine pickin's foh us."

Lorenzo was again staring at the gathering troops. "You don't reckon the Yanks'll bother us none, do you?"

"We mout have to buy a few off. Them prisoners from Libby was robbin' some clothin' stores 'n' I reckon a lot of 'em'll want home-cooked vittels. But, hell, we can give a little food 'n' a little silver. I'm glad to do it. They sho come in time to save our bacon."

"Yeh, the fire ain't spreadin' no moh. . . . I hope to Christ Brose Kirby is one that don't come back."

"Heh-heh-heh!" Milton was happy to see his son getting over

his doldrums. "You sho like it, don't you, boy?" He slapped him on the back.

It must be now de kingdom comin' . . . and de year of jubilo. . .

Paul was halfway across the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad bridge before he saw that the fire was creeping across the ties toward him. He paused and measured the distance to the island the steel works were on. If he could get there before the fire, he could climb down, cross it, and swim the canal. There was no other way of getting into the city without the Yankees seeing him. He looked at the gutted buildings along the river edge, the smoking walls, the débris in the streets. He had to get home.

He started a slow trot, hitting every third tie. He began to get dizzy. His head was light anyway, from weakness. He had walked twenty-five miles since last night, without sleep, with no supper except the ear of hard corn he had been given from the horses' forage. His teeth still ached from it. The muddy river far below seemed to rush up toward him in broken waves. He stumbled. He caught his balance and slowed to a walk.

He was almost at the stone bridge support at the bank of the island. So was the blaze. Beyond the second stone support the bridge had fallen in. He saw the burning slices of wood and the twisted hot steel on the island. The flames on the bridge seemed to scurry toward him. He ran forward to the support and climbed out on it. The smoke swirled along the ties and eddied over him. He felt the rushing heat. His eyes stung from sweat. The creaking sounded as if the section of bridge would collapse any second.

He stooped on one knee, pushed the other leg out into space, and gripped the edge with his hands. They were wet. He wiped them on his trousers. The grinding and crackle was deafening. He trembled and the long-familiar emptiness in his stomach sapped his strength. God, wasn't he an artillery veteran? . . .

Blinded, he dropped. He hung by his hardened arms until he steadied. Then he let go, pushing his chin behind his arm to protect

his face from the stones. The ground jolted the breath out of him and his head snapped back. He staggered away and stood still. He had taken too many hard falls from caissons to be alarmed about deflated breath. He helped his laboring lungs. He would n't be able to stop blowing until he could really rest. Beyond, up the river, he saw the tents on Belle Isle. If those prisoners were loose, he'd have to watch out for them too. He struck across the island.

At the canal, a crowded, flat, open boat was moving slowly toward him. He stood on the bank and saw the negro women in it. They were sitting placidly, looking at him, while a negro man in the centre was keeping the boat from the bank with a pole. The boat was piled with bags of clothes, stoves, tables, china cabinets, bureaus, sideboards, barrels of china and utensils. The women spoke in low voices to the man and he started to shove the boat out further from the bank.

Paul pulled a Yankee officer's blue-steel Colt out of his waist-band. "Pull that boat in here, you black bastard," he yelled.

The women started to scream. The negro held the pole straight out and gaped.

"I'm not going to hurt you," Paul yelled. "I want to get across here."

They stopped screaming then and the man eased the broad open boat near the shore. When it was about five feet away Paul ran forward a few steps and jumped. He landed between an old fat negress and a pickaninny. He straightened, holding the big pistol out in front of him. He backed to the edge of the boat. They all stared at him, their eyes wide. The man pushed the boat across the canal. Over their heads he saw the blackened walls of the armory, the emptiness inside visible through the paneless windows. Black piles of cannon ball and grape lay abandoned.

"Yankees in town, mistuh," the fat negress said.

"Already?"

"Yes suh, thousands 'n' thousands of 'em." They all looked at his uniform.

There was nothing except his coat that belonged to a regular

uniform. The battered gray slouch hat, the dirty white shirt he had gotten off a dead Yankee, the black trousers that had been his father's, the heavy shoes—they might be the clothes of a farmer. He stripped off the short jacket with the tarnished buttons. He rolled it up.

"Give me something to wrap this in."

They looked at each other and mumbled. He saw a linen tablecloth with "C" embroidered on it. He snatched it up. They started to wail. The negro man grunted and stopped pushing. Paul swung the gun on him.

"You've been robbing homes. You might've robbed mine! If you don't shut up and push this boat, I'll kill every goddamned one of you. I got a mind to do it anyway."

The man pushed. The women moaned. "We ain't rob no home. We got this yere out'n the stores. Everybody's gittin' things out'n the stores. White folks and Yankee prisoners from Libby. Foh Gawd, we ain't rob nary home."

Paul wrapped the coat in the tablecloth. The boat bumped against the bank. He picked his way over the piles and jumped off. He waved the gun. "Push on."

He cut over to Seventh Street. Beyond the arch under the railroad tracks, where the foot of the bridge had been, nothing remained but the stone supports at intervals. Beside the tracks broken signals tilted. He hurried up the hill. The desolation around him blurred in his mind with the memories of last night and early morning, like a jumbled succession of double film exposures. The smouldering junk heap that had been the paper company, flanked by two walls with ragged tops and eyeless windows, ran into the muttering blackness of the underground shelter of Fort Clifton, with the sand seeping through from the basket weaving of the gabions supporting the front walls, and the men filing out, leaving their spiked guns behind. *What kind of artillery is without their guns?* . . .

The wreckage of railroad engines and cars and rails, around the skeleton walls of the Richmond and Petersburg Depot, faded into

the black, shell-torn woods with the men creeping away from their breastworks toward the main army that they knew stretched somewhere ahead, moving westward with their wagons. A charred sign, BOWLES & FITZPATRICK, on a bare wall that fronted on a collapsed roof, was imposed upon the gray morning with the remnants of the artillery company shuffling down the muddy road while he watched them from behind a clump of scrub pine. A pair of chimneys, pointing above the smoking ruins of a home where a white bedstead poked through plastering and laths, filtered into the abandoned gun embrasure south of Richmond where he had lain in the gully and watched the band of Union cavalry inspect the spiked gun and ride on after Lee's army.

At Main Street he saw the first Yankee soldiers. They glanced at him and passed on. They stood guard in front of buildings and formed lines against the fire. Down at Ninth Street, the block across from the Customshouse was nothing but broken walls, smouldering around emptiness. On the tall Customshouse the red-striped flag of the United States was flying. Negro troops marched up the street. *Say, darkies, have you seen the massa . . .*

Paul pulled the bundle of his jacket close against his body, hiding the pistol in his waistband, and moved across Main Street. Crowds of Yankees and civilians milled in front of the Spotswood. The spies and speculators were coming out now. The fire coming up Main had stopped below the hotel, but behind it, on the south side of Franklin, thin columns of smoke curled. His brain was helpless, as in a nightmare when unchecked visions keep unrolling.

The sidewalk was cluttered with people, mostly women, sitting on trunks and beds and chairs and bureaus and bundles. They were all quiet. Yankee soldiers patrolled the street. They looked at him, but none spoke. There were a lot of negroes moving down around the black troops. *De darkies stay, ha ha . . .*

He crossed Franklin and glanced down toward the Wade house. He stopped there, on the flagstones, in the middle of the street. The semicircular iron steps reached up to the iron-railed balcony,

and behind them was nothing. They curved upward, ready for feet to mount them, like a drawing out of his childhood's Bible stories of stairs climbing toward heaven. Tendrils of smoke drifted out of the wreckage. He remembered the afternoon when he had worn his new Howitzers' uniform and he had seen Mildred Wade leaning on that balcony railing, waving, with the April sun gold in her hair. He stared, trying to clear his brain of all the confused flashes that crowded it. This was like part of the nightmare.

It could n't be that the big, gray, square stone house was not there; that there were no white-banistered stairs curving up in the paneled hall; that the oblong living room upstairs that overlooked the lindens was no more; that no more would the sun break through the ivy in the alcove lined with leather books, no more would Mildred Wade smile as she poured tea in china cups. He had dreamed of visiting Brose and Mildred in that room, of being shown into that immense parlor he had glimpsed as he went upstairs. *And why did you join?* . . . She had asked him that when they were sitting around the fireplace and the sun gleamed on the brass fixtures.

"Get outa th' way, you Rebel hick!"

Paul jumped. A Yankee sutler's wagon was bearing down on him. He moved backward to the sidewalk, looking at the jeering face leaning out of the wagon. The wagon bounced on down the deserted street. Paul turned slowly, moved toward Grace Street. Where were the Wades? He began to hurry. All else was blotted from his mind by the picture of those iron steps leading up to nothing. He turned into Grace. The fire had not touched here. The family would be safe. He hurried faster, almost running. A Yankee officer on a horse gave him a sharp glance. *If he tries to stop me, I'll kill him.* . . . The officer rode on. Paul turned into Fourth Street.

The leaves were fresh green on the chestnut in front of the house and grass was coming up in the short lawn. It showed up the dinginess of the paint. He ran up the sagging wooden steps

and hurled himself at the door. It was locked. He knocked. There was no sound. His heart thumped loud in the sudden tension. He knocked again. "It's Paul. It's Paul!" he yelled.

He heard a rustle behind the door. His mother's face was pale in the dim light. She looked at him as though she didn't recognize him. He moved through the door and closed it behind him. Then he saw Marie. She sidled around his mother and bolted the door.

"Thank Gawd you come, Mr. Paul, the Yankee trash been heah twice't."

"How'd you get rid of them?"

"I just told 'em we was Union people."

"Paul, Paul, oh, what are you doing here?" His mother threw herself on him and her thin arms gripped convulsively.

"I was scared for you-all, Mamma. It was n't any use to stay with the army. We left our guns. The men were deserting right and left. We could n't do anything, without arms. We were about starved out anyway."

"You deserted?" She pulled back.

"Oh, that won't matter, Mamma. The army can't last a week. They haven't any supplies. The horses are so weak they can't pull the wagons and guns through the mud. There're hardly thirty thousand left."

"Thirty thousand left—in Lee's army?"

"If that. I knew they were evacuatin' Richmond and the Yanks would be in. I wanted to be here with you-all. How's Elizabeth?"

His mother shook her head. Her eyes were deep in her head, blackly circled. He saw lines in her dark face that hadn't been there before.

"All she talks of is Chester. I've been nearly crazy to-day. I thought the fire would get here. There isn't a particle of food in the house and I'm afraid to go out and try to get any, and the Wades are here, and —"

"Here?"

"Yes, their house — "

"I saw it."

"If you could've come sooner you might've saved it. A man could have put it out, Mildred said. Sparks caught the back porticoes. Mrs. Wade got hysterical and the old lady fainted, and they had to get them out. By that time all Mildred could do with the help of John was to save a few things. Poor child, she's got Brose's letters."

Outside they heard the metallic rhythm of marching men, hob-nails ringing. Marie rolled her eyes at Paul.

"Don't tell them I'm here," he said.

Then brass music crashed. It seemed to thunder through the house, beating at them. The tune was somehow familiar, but unpleasant. His mother stiffened and her mouth drew down. There was the fierce light in her eyes again.

"The devils. The nigger-loving devils."

From back in the house, Paul heard a high-pitched discordant voice.

Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light . . .

It was Elizabeth, and the grating, crazy sound sent chills down him.

. . . what so proudly we hailed . . .

Her mother gave him one look and ran down the hall. Paul, cold inside, ran after her. He stumbled against Marie. She pushed on ahead of him.

He followed into the dining room. Elizabeth stood in the centre, shrieking the words to the music. Her eyes were glazed and her face was as white as a dead man's. Mildred Wade was beside her, saying something. Granny was sitting upright in her chair and several strange women clustered around her. Judy Kirby ran up to Elizabeth and shook her.

"Elizabeth. Elizabeth! Stop it!"

Elizabeth broke off. Her eyes fixed vacantly.

"Don't you hear me?" Mrs. Kirby cried.

Elizabeth laughed. Paul's blood turned to ice. Mildred Wade

backed away. Even his mother dropped her hands. Elizabeth shouted through her laughter.

"Yes, I hear! I hear them laughing. Laugh with them. Laugh! Everybody laugh! They're yelling and playing their bands because they've killed him. They're playing for him out there in his grave and yelling because they put him there . . ."

Paul had never admired his mother so much as then. He could n't have touched Elizabeth if his life depended on it. Judy Kirby was as pale as the rest of them, but she took hold of Elizabeth and drew her close as if she were a little girl. "My child," she said. "My child."

Elizabeth grew quiet. The only sound in the room was the faint blare of the army band in the distance.

O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave. . . .

CHAPTER XXXV

RICHMOND, VA., *April 20, 1865*

I, Ambrose F. Kirby, do solemnly swear in the presence of Almighty God, that I will henceforth faithfully support, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States and the union of the States thereunder; and that I will in like manner abide by and faithfully support all laws and proclamations which have been made during the existing rebellion with reference to the emancipation of slaves . . . So help me God. . . .

Each day she waited at the head of the pontoon bridge on Eighteenth Street. The Yankee guards became so used to seeing her that they spoke. She never answered. The Yankee officer stayed in a small, one-room, windowless shack on the bank of the river. Mildred stood with her back to that and watched the soldiers crossing the bridge.

It was a thin line that straggled endlessly from dawn until dusk. Sometimes she saw a man she had known. They touched their hats, but never paused. Not one spoke or smiled. Many soldiers she had never seen before raised their hats. Most of them did not lift their eyes. Staring at the ground, they shuffled in their broken shoes, their burlap sacks, their strips of rawhide. No flash of musket or shining bayonet brightened their gray rags. With empty haversacks against their flanks, they walked with empty hands.

Other women and children and older men stood near her and waited. They talked of Lee's surrender. Some said it was a shame the army had not escaped and continued its fighting in the

mountains. Some said the army should never have tried to escape; they should have surrendered when Richmond was evacuated. Some were glad that peace had come, no matter how, and some were bitter and wished the Confederacy had fought on as long as there was a man alive.

Some wept, some cursed, some slumped with bowed heads, and some just stood, lifeless, watching with dead eyes the broken men shuffling across the bridge. Mildred heard their talk, but she had no words. All that her mind conceived was Brose.

Now, after four years, since first she had felt the impact of him on Secession Night, he was to be hers all the time. Four years she had loved him as she had always dreamed of loving a man. Two years she had been wholly his. More than a year she had been his wife and never had they shared a room, a meal alone, a period of time that would not end. Never once had she known the intimacy of their undressing together or of awakening in the morning in the same bed.

Now all their years of living lay before them. It did not matter that they would begin with nothing in the ruins of Richmond. Always it had been their love that was important. They had yet its secret places to discover, its little pleasures and sweet intimacies. They had a joint life to build around their love and it seemed good that they could build it as the city was built.

There would be no more fears of Yankees coming, of what might happen to Richmond. The Yankees were here and the worst had happened to Richmond. There would be no army to claim him. He would be hers alone, to fulfill at last the passion and the violence he had awakened on that red night when the torches glared in his black eyes and the bugles blared behind him. *In Dixieland I'll take my stand . . . to live and die in Dixie . . .*

All of that old life was gone. The fire had destroyed, in her home and the warehouse, all that Richmond knew of the Wades. With her mother gone to live with the Wades at Kensington, there was none left of that name in the city. Her own name was Kirby, her own life his, and his life would be no more that of one of

Lee's men. They would begin together, fresh, with a completely new life to share.

Always she watched closely the soldiers when some of the waiting women ran to meet them. She must be prepared to have him look as grayed and crushed as did these men. But she must n't show her shock as did these women. They cried out and fell weeping on the soldiers. The soldiers stared with defeated eyes beyond the women, at the ruins of their city. One woman wailed, "We have no home, we have no home," over and over again, while the man stared, like one in a trance, at the gutted walls of houses. One young woman retreated from a gray-bearded private, her face stricken, and a little girl clung to her skirts, crying as she looked up at her father. "Good God," the soldier said, "is this the reward a man gets for fighting for his country?" He shuffled off alone. In a little while, the young woman and the child followed behind him.

She must not show by any suggestion her awareness of the way he looked. She must try to be like the girl he remembered, the woman she wanted to be to him in all their days to come. From the first moment, she must turn his mind from the war. She would not mention that her home was burned, or even mention Richmond's wreckage. She told herself this during the long hours she waited by the river, yet, when he came shuffling across the bridge, she faltered.

If he had glanced up then, he would have seen her stricken like all the other women. But his eyes were cast down, like the other men's. His thinned body slumped. There was no swinging of his shoulders, no rhythm to his walk. His face grayed, his empty hands hanging by his sides, he was a weary, broken man. *My black 'un . . .* The cry was in her soul and she stumbled forward, just as the other women had.

The movement must have caught his glance. He raised his head slightly and looked from under dusty brows. Her heart stopped its beat as she stared into his dulled eyes. He stared back and no light flared. His eyes were black holes in the shadows of his

sunken sockets. No expression touched his grayed face. He just stood there, waiting for her. As all the other women had done, she threw herself on him. She felt his arms limp around her shoulders. And, as all the other men had done, he stared beyond her.

"Oh, my darling," she cried. "My darling . . ." She could n't say any more. She clung to him and stiffened herself to repress the sobs.

"The city . . ." His voice was dead like his eyes. "The city . . . I did n't know it'd be this bad."

"Don't think of the city now." She said it fast, in one breath, and then closed her lips tight to hold in the cry.

"Pat's saloon . . . nothing but a chimney . . ."

"I know, darling . . . everything's nothing but a chimney . . . but you're back and — and it's all over . . . we have peace . . ."

"Peace? Has Johnston surrendered?"

"Yes. It's all over and — and you're back."

"I did n't know the city would be like this. There's nothing left."

"Yes, Brose, there's plenty left. Your home's left." She had control of herself now and she lifted her head and forced herself to look into his crushed face. "You're going home now, darling. You can have rest, and food, and you can forget all about — about it." She turned quickly away and then, so he would n't suspect why, she took his arm and gave a gentle tug.

He did n't move. His sooty eyes turned to her. He stared so long at her that she grew uneasy. Then his cut, calloused hand raised slowly and touched her cheek. "Mildred." His hand fell. Then his head dropped forward. After a moment, he moved ahead. Climbing the rise, she saw a crowd of finely dressed civilians near the Yankee officer's hut. They stared at Brose and her, in cold curiosity.

"Who're those people?" he asked.

"They're from the North. They came after — after the evacuation."

"What're they doing here?"

"Looking for ways to make money out of us, and just looking at us."

"Come to look at us?" His voice was like a very old man's.

"Yes, darling, to see the great soldiers of Lee's armies."

He did n't say anything. His gaze wandered, and settled on the dim faces behind the bars in Libby Prison. "Have n't they turned loose the Yankee prisoners yet?"

"They're Confederates in there, mostly from the government. They're being held for treason."

He walked on in silence, seeming to ponder it. "Have the Yanks bothered you much?"

"Not — much. Several annoyed us for a few days, but the commandant gave us a guard and now it's all right."

They turned into Main Street and his steps slowed. She saw his lifeless eyes move slowly along the path of destruction. Two women dressed in black bent over among the bricks and junk beside a lone, jagged wall. Outside steps mounted to a bared doorway. She thought Brose was looking at the women. Then he said: —

"Look at all the lampposts standing. Did n't burn them."

She turned her face away from him, quickly, and convulsively pulled him on. He shuffled in his broken shoes. Again she steadied the sorrow that threatened to unnerve her. She said quietly: —

"Brose, darling, try not to think of this. It's all over now and we're going to begin our lives together. We've got years ahead of us. We can help rebuild Richmond, while we build our own lives. It's not so bad as it seems to you now. You will try, won't you — for me?"

He nodded, but his eyes did not shift from the ruins. She started to speak again; then she realized that he was not accustomed to the desolated city, as she was. She must project herself into his mood and try to see through his eyes the bare, ragged walls, the empty window sockets, the chimneys lifted above débris, the endless piles of charred brick and timber, of warped furniture and

ashes of clothes, the iron fences of homes enclosing leveled heaps of wreckage, the blossoming trees shading wall-less rooms with remnants of furniture still standing, and, in one, an unmade bed. But she couldn't. She didn't want to look at the junk strewn in walled gardens. She wanted to see their future, to see them together!

"Look," he said. He pointed to the ruins of the Southern Express Company, where two stone columns reared above the scattered masonry. They were blocked out against the April sky, with crossed slabs near the top. "It looks like two crosses."

"Yes . . . darling . . ." Why couldn't she talk as she had planned? Why couldn't she turn his mind away from the fire? But the tears kept pressing up and she had to keep choking back the sobs.

He started to turn up Ninth Street. She checked him.

"Let's stay on Main," she said.

"We used to turn up Ninth when we were going to your house."

"We're not going to my house now." She tried to sound cheerful. "Everybody is waiting to see you at your house. Paul is there too."

He shuffled on up Main. A slim Yankee officer, flanked by two negro soldiers, halted briskly in front of Brose, blocking his way. Brose slowly lifted his head. The officer was trim, sharp-featured, self-important. He glanced over Brose and then said harshly:—

"What're you doing with those Rebel buttons on your coat?"

Brose stared dully at him. The officer snapped out a long finger, tapped him on the chest. "Your Rebel buttons," he said.

Brose looked down at the tarnished buttons hanging loosely on his jacket, then back at the officer. Mildred waited tensely. Now she would see the old glare in his eyes. But nothing lit their sooty black. He just looked at the officer with a puzzled expression.

"He just got into Richmond . . ." Her words cried out of her and her voice was breaking. She drew in a breath. "He doesn't

know anything about not wearing Confederate buttons on the street."

"He knows it now. They'll have to come off."

"He'll take them off when he gets home!" Her voice broke and she felt the tears stinging her eyes.

"He is not allowed on the street with those Rebel buttons on his uniform. They'll have to come off." His sabre gleamed in the sun.

Mildred jumped in front of him. "No, you won't cut them off!" Her sudden rage gave body to her voice. "I'll take them off him." She brushed away the mist in her eyes and grabbed the top button. The string thinned out and the button dropped in her hand. She clenched her teeth to keep from crying. She wouldn't! She wouldn't!

"What's the matter?" Brose looked from her to the officer.

"Rebels are not allowed to wear their buttons," he said harshly, "and you'd better come down and swear your oath of allegiance, too."

"What oath?"

"To the United States — if you want to be a citizen of your country."

The last button ripped off, tearing the rotten cloth. Mildred whirled on the officer. "He'll never swear any oath of allegiance to a country who produces swine like you."

"Be careful of your tongue." His face grew brick red.

"I'll be as careful of my tongue as you are of your manners."

The officer drew himself up, very stiff. "The buttons on his hat will have to come off too," he said coldly.

"They'll come off," she flared at him. "I won't give you any further chance to bully him, and show off with your cheap arrogance. A gallant enemy you are, talking to him as you would n't dare if you did n't have a city full of Yankees behind you. But you can't make him sign the oath. He's a citizen of the Confederacy, and, defeated or not, he'll remain one as long as he lives."

Brose's black hat was shoved into her hands. She took it and

turned to him. Life suspended in her. His dusty hair was streaked with gray, not the gray from marching, but the gray that would be there always. The roll-brimmed, flat-crowned hat hung in her limp fingers. Mechanically she worried at the buttons until they gave. He took the hat out of her hands and dropped it on his grayed hair. Mildred forgot about the officer. She moved ahead, unseeing, over the sidewalk.

She was thinking that never again would she see him as he had been on Secession Night. Never again would he be reckless and laughing, with violence undertoning his voice and heat glaring in his black eyes. Never, never would she hear bugles blaring behind him. Into the bleakness of her thoughts, his lifeless voice sounded.

"General Lee told us to come home and forget the war. He said we must work for Virginia in peace now. But I don't see how we can forget it—if things are like this."

She drew in a long breath, as if she were drawing on some last reserve of energy. "We'll have to forget it. We'll have to work, whatever things are like, at our life." She could n't say *new* life. She could n't call up the dream of their lives as she had pictured them during the waiting hours at the pontoon bridge. There was n't any dream any more—no desire, no fire. It was just something that somehow she had to live through. She closed her mind against it. He was talking slowly.

". . . I don't see how we can forget. I don't like Yankees. I'll sign the oath, for peace, but—but I wish we'd kept on fighting."

That was where he had left his violence and his passion, with the army. What of hers? Nothing . . . nothing. Her life was his life, and now, as best she could, she must help him merely to live.

"Your fighting's over now, Brose. You could n't've gone on. Everyone says the army was surrounded. They had over one hundred thousand and I heard that only twenty-seven thousand Confederates were paroled."

"Yes, but I hated to see the Old Man give in to them. Some of us could've broken through, like we did when our division was

broken. We could 've fought on. I sure hated to see him give up." A little life came into his voice as he talked. She paused at the wooden gate in front of his house. He went on talking, his gaze beyond her.

"I thought to the very end we'd break through somehow. I'd rather have hid in the mountains and fought on than to have seen him give up like he did. It was awful to see him come back after he had surrendered." He shook his head.

She heard sounds in the house and saw the eager faces at the window. Now she must summon up the courage by which she would endure through all her living days. She laid her hand on his arm.

"Brose, all your family's waiting to see you. Please, for my sake, don't think of General Lee now. Won't you try to be happy that we — that all of us are together?"

He nodded, as though he had n't heard. A faint light glowed in his eyes and the grayness seemed to have lifted from his face. Almost there was a suggestion of the old fierceness.

"You know," he said, "when the Old Man passed us, coming back from the surrender, I touched his stirrup."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For aid in gathering research material, and for suggestions, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Stuart Rose; Dr. Douglas S. Freeman; Major Bernard H. Baylor, assistant adjutant of the Virginia National Guard; Colonel Bryan Conrad, assistant historian of the Commonwealth of Virginia; Miss Susan B. Harrison, of the Confederate Museum; Mr. Charles Milham; Mr. Edgar Brooke; Mr. Arthur D. Howden Smith; my great-aunt, Mrs. Anne Boucher Blunt, and my father.

As to books — *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (4 volumes) and *Photographic History of the Civil War* (10 volumes), while contributing to the picture of war life in Richmond, served mainly as sources of detail regarding the war and the soldiers in Virginia, as guides to actual events and their effect on the city. Also used extensively in this capacity were Douglas Freeman's *R. E. Lee*, Major John Thomason's *Jeb Stuart*, and Robert Selph Henry's *The Story of the Confederacy*. For the battles around Richmond, I used Steele's *American Campaigns* (2 volumes).

For the fighting that came close to Richmond, I was greatly helped by eyewitness accounts in certain of the *Southern Historical Society Papers*. A number of details concerning the defenses around the city and the use of the local defense troops were obtained from the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, though I make no claims to having studied thoroughly that massive collection of reports. Supplementing this study were the defenses themselves, well preserved and excellently marked, to an understanding of which I was aided by Colonel Bryan Conrad (U.S.A. retired).

The best factual guide for the events in the city was J. B. Jones's *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, recently republished in two volumes and

splendidly annotated by Howard Swiggett. Briefer accounts are contained in W. Asbury Christian's *Richmond, Her Past and Present* and Mrs. Mary Newton Stanard's *Richmond, Its People and Its Story*. Many details of the color of the times were found in a curious little book, *Hidden Things Brought to Light*, by Ernest Taylor Walthall, which was discovered to me by Mr. August Dietz, of the Dietz Press in Richmond.

Recently published short war memoirs and prints of the old city in the *Richmond News Leader* were helpful, as were the handsome prints in Alexander Weddell's *Richmond in Old Prints (1737-1837)*. The newspapers of the time supplied opinions and local color, but they were most undependable for facts. Also, I have been fortunate in talking with many of my kinspeople, most of them now dead, who remembered the city, its life during the war, and the soldiers and leaders who walked its streets.

In addition to those mentioned, the books I most constantly consulted were:—

Diary of a Refugee, by Mrs. Judith McGuire; *Richmond During the War*, by Mrs. Sally Brock; *Recollections Grave and Gay*, by Mrs. Burton Harrison; *Reminiscences of Peace and War*, by Mrs. Roger A. Pryor; *A Diary from Dixie*, by Mrs. Mary Bodkin Chesnut; *A Southern Girl in '61*, by Mrs. D. Giraud Wright; *A Belle of the Fifties*, by Mrs. Virginia Clay-Clopton; *The End of an Era*, by John S. Wise; *Four Years in Rebel Capitals and Belles, Beaux and Brains of the Sixties*, by T. C. DeLeon; *The Lost Cause*, by E. A. Pollard; *A Rebel's Recollections*, by George Cary Eggleston; *One of Jackson's Foot Cavalry, Including a History of "F Company," Richmond*, by John H. Worsham; *Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia*, by Carlton McCarthy, Second Company of Richmond Howitzers; *Virginia's Attitude to Secession and Slavery*, by Beverly B. Munford; *Conflict and Conscription in the Confederacy*, by Albert B. Moore; *Military Memoirs of a Confederate*, by Edward Porter Alexander; *A Famous Command, the Richmond Light Infantry Blues*, by John A. Cutchins; *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer*, by General G. Moxley Sorrel; *James Longstreet, Lee's War Horse*, by Hamilton

James Eckenrode and Bryan Conrad; *The Falling Flag*, by Edward M. Boykin; *Pickett and His Men*, by Mrs. LaSalle Corbell Pickett; *Messages and Papers of the Confederacy* (2 volumes), by James D. Richardson; *Jefferson Davis*, by Allen Tate; *War History of the Old First Virginia Regiment*, by Charles T. Loehr; *Richmond Howitzers in the War*, by F. S. Daniel; *Reminiscences of the First Company Richmond Howitzers*, by T. J. Macon; *Ham Chamberlayne, Virginian* (letters from a Richmond soldier in the Howitzers), by C. S. Chamberlayne. I found a good deal of color of the army and Richmond in the novels and biographies of John Esten Cooke, and in the delightful *Memoirs of the Confederate War for Independence*, by Major Heros von Borcke (2 volumes).

I have omitted from this list all general books on the war and the period which did not contribute to the understanding of life in and the background of Richmond during the years 1861-1865.

LEGEND

Explanation of Numerals on the Map

1. Gen. Lee's House
2. Mildred Wade's House
3. Kirby House
4. War Office (Virginus Kirby's
& Philip Parramore's Offices)
5. Government Offices &
St. George Paxton's House
(Now New U.S. Customs Ho. & P.O.)
6. Spotswood Hotel (New)
7. Depot where Brose came
in during winter night &
X where Mildred waited
8. Wade Warehouse
9. Libby Prison
10. House where Jeb Stuart
was brought
11. Arsenal buildings & Island
where Eliz. worked
12. Mrs. Fitchett's House
13. John Marshall's House
14. House the Dukes acquired,
from which they watched
the Evacuation
15. V. Kirby's House
16. President Davis's White
House: on the edge of a
sheer hill
17. Bell Tower which sounded
"tocsin"
18. Where Mildred waited
for Brose after Surrender
19. Mechanics' Hall
20. Charles Kirby's Drugstore
21. State Capitol & Public Sq.
22. Ballard House
23. Tredegar Locomotive Wrks
24. Gallego Mills

Scale in Feet

0 1000 2000



Published first in 1937, *BUGLES BLOW NO MORE*, was partially eclipsed by *GONE WITH THE WIND*, which had been published several months earlier. *BUGLES BLOW NO MORE* was Mitchell's special favorite among novels of the War.

No one book will ever tell the whole story of the War between the States. No histories will ever tell it because they can never convey a picture of the emotions of the human strengths and weaknesses of the little things that illuminate the past far more than records of battles won or lost. For these we shall always have to turn to the honest historical novelist who instills into his imaginary characters the spirit that inspired the men and women of the past. That is what Mr. Dowd has done.

Jacket designed by William Davenport

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